THE GREAT STONE GODS by JOEL TOWNSLEY ROGERS

25¢

Adventure

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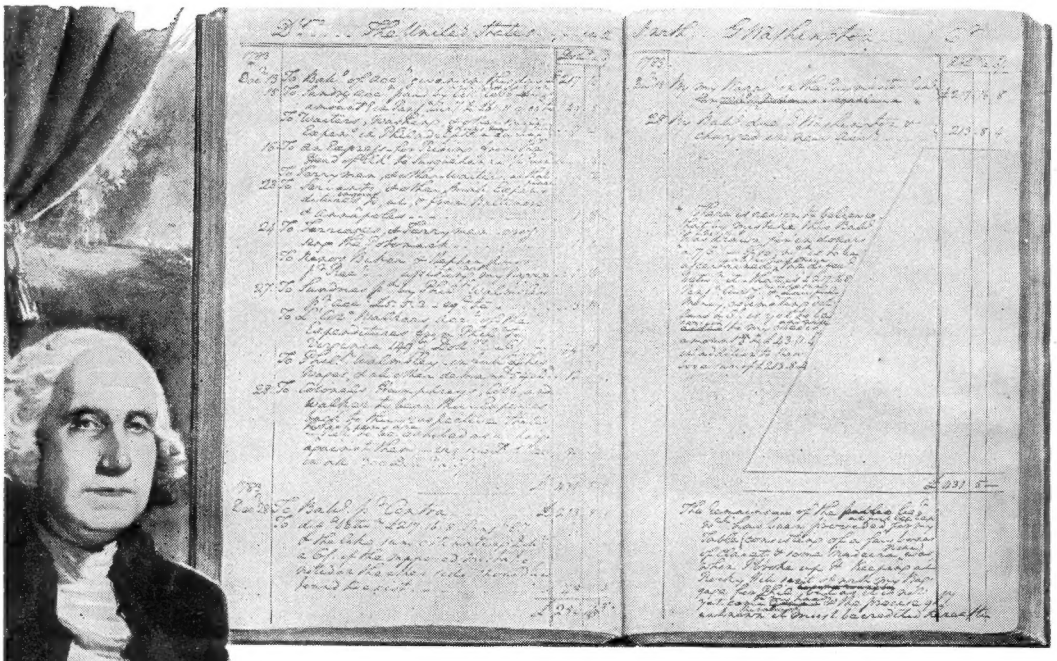
MAR.

LOST FACE
A "KOROPOK" STORY
by SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL

KEITH EDGAR
H.S.M. KEMP
JIM KJELGAARD



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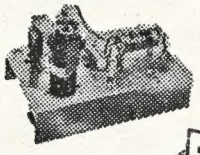

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Vol. 112, No. 5 for Best of New Stories

March, 1945

NOVELETTES

The Great Stone Gods (an off-the-trail-story)..JOEL TOWNSLEY ROGERS 12

There they lay—half-covered by the rotting leaf-mold of the jungle—those mammoth obsidian images before which had bowed in awful worship the populace of the world's once greatest empire. Now only Esmerado, trapped at their toppled altar, remained to do them homage and listen to the feeble podding of the four o'clock drums that echoed but faintly the mighty booming which had called the multitudes in bygone centuries. Only Esmerado—until the day after the maguey tree had bloomed. And then there were five to chant unholy prayers over the shards of the gods.

Lost Face.....SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL 42

No one in Tokyo had ever suspected Koropok's double identity until the stuttering gendarme, Kudzumi, overheard a mumbled phrase in English. It was a neat bit of covering up the half-conscious American did—sufficent to maintain his guise as a bearded pariah—but the Jap officer still had doubts so Lew Davies, the counterfeit Ainu, got shipped to the Formosan camphor camps. If Kudzumi had guessed his prisoner would arrange *harakiri* for him as Yank B-29s roared overhead he might not have been quite so anxious to swell his slave-labor quota with a possible *Amerika-jin*.

SHORT STORIES

Handle with Care.....KEITH EDGAR 33

His hand heavy on the Johnson bar, Crazy McIntosh, that highballing hogger, finally lets his temper catch up with him and manages to get himself suspended. For thirty years he'd got away with breaking every rule on the railroad so he figured he might as well break a few more on his final run. The consequences weren't exactly as Bub, his brakeman, joyfully predicted.

Scratch One Red Squirrel.....STUART D. LUDLUM 39

Danny Barton's dad had done his damndest to teach the kid that planes are like ducks—not squirrels—and that you've got to keep swinging if you ever expect to bag one. But it was no use. Danny kept seeing the outlines of red rodents superimposed on Jap Zeros. They were rodents all right—but he just couldn't get 'em to sit still long enough to shoot.

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BE OUT ON MARCH 14TH ◆◆◆

Pigeoner..... JIM KJELGAARD 64

Corliss stood on the banks of the Ohio and watched the passenger pigeons fly overhead with never a break in their ranks for eighteen solid hours. But that had been eleven years before. Since then he'd slaughtered more millions than he could ever count and now—stalking the last great flock—he knew his butchering days were over—in more ways than one.

Get Off My Back..... ROBERT H. WALL, JR. 72

That little book the Army issued Stinky to acquaint him with Australia was all right so far as it went. It covered wallabies and kangaroos and Aussie money fine but left out women. Of course, strictly speaking, no book ever written could straighten Stinky out on the subject of women, Aussie or otherwise, any more than this one did.

The Tight Shoes of Murder..... H. S. M. KEMP 124

Most killers are content if they can make a murder victim appear to be a suicide. Corporal Pete Lawson of the RCMP had encountered a few such on his northland patrol. But this was the first time he'd ever run onto the reverse. Certain evidence seemed to indicate that the half-bushed Rufe Daniels had done himself in, yet the most likely killer prospect in the neighborhood apparently wanted to make a murder out of it all. It just didn't make sense.

THE SERIAL

Roger Sudden (4th of 5 parts)..... THOMAS H. RADDALL 86

In which Sudden's fortunes rise with a speed to match his name as he corners the Nova Scotian fur market, trading under cover with British and French alike, smuggling when he can't do business in the open. Yet all the while the drums of war rumble in his ears till at last the wilderness runs red with blood—and his luck deserts him as quickly as it came.

THE FACT STORY

Florida's Flaming Six-Guns..... JACK MURRAY 80

Few people realize that today the "Everglade" state is racing steer for steer with the "Lone Star" as the largest cattle-raiser in the country and that only yesterday her Taylor County Cattle War of 1910 rivaled any of the bloody battles that raged in Texas in her palmiest Wild West days before the turn of the century.

DEPARTMENTS

The Camp-Fire.....Where readers, writers and adventurers meet 6

Ask Adventure.....Information you can't get elsewhere 137

Ask Adventure Experts.....The men who furnish it 138

Lost Trails.....Where old paths cross 145

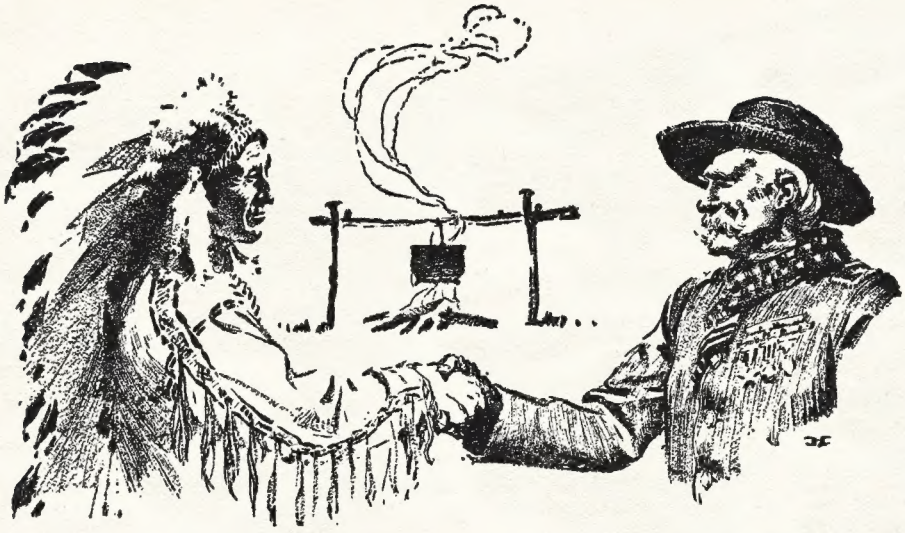
The Trail Ahead.....News of next month's issue 140

Cover painted for Adventure by Ernest Chiriacka
Kenneth S. White, Editor

IF YOUR COPY OF THIS MAGAZINE IS LATE—

We regret that, due to the difficulties of wartime transportation, your *Adventure* may sometimes be a little late in reaching you. If this should happen, your patience will be appreciated. Please do not write complaining of the delay. It occurs after the magazine leaves our offices and is caused by conditions beyond our control.

—The Publishers.



THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

ONLY two recruits to add to the ranks of our Writers' Brigade this month. Robert H. Wall, Jr., who gives us "Get Off My Back" on page 72, is, as are so many contributors these days, "unavailable for personal comment." We had to call on his agent, who called in turn, we suspect, on Mrs. W. for help. Here's how she introduces her GI husband—

Born April 16, 1909 in Antioch, California. Wanted to be a pianist, architect, and goodness knows what else. When he reached the age of reasoning he decided college would be a good thing, so he migrated to Berkeley and the University of California. Yes, he wrote the Junior Farce, was editor of their Occident one year, etc. etc. He had ideas about being a professor of literature (he sometimes quotes Chaucer in Old English!). He eventually decided against it—maybe because he isn't the professor type. Anyway he emerged with a degree of some kind—into the depression. He wrote a few radio plays along about this time. Then he went into a CCC Camp. His experiences there are something to hear! From there he went to the National Park Service, and then to the U. S. Travel Bureau where he was an assistant supervisor. That's where he met the now Mrs. Wall. (This entire scene is laid in San Francisco by the way.)

Came the war. And the U. S. Travel Bureau folded. After a short stint as a civilian with Army Ordnance in San Francisco he went whole hog and traded for a private-ship in the Army. In six months he was alternately lyrical and truthful. He lost his "amateur" standing and became a PFC and then a T/5. At last letter he was "at sea" moving somewhere else. Perhaps it was the Philippine invasion. He's over 6 feet, very handsome, with silver wings at the temples—which is why the boys in New Guinea called him Junior. As the Army goes, he's considered an old man. He has now been in the Army a year or more.

His hobbies are music (Beethoven is his favorite, from the looks of his record album, but it isn't surprising to find a Count Basie or the Jersey Bounce on the same shelf) and gardening—for which he has the magic green thumb and can make bulbs grow from seeds. He's an avid reader, everything from Kay Boyle, one of his favorites, to mystery stories. He likes people and is a wonderful but kind mimic. And a wonderful cook. He has also written a novel which he won't let his wife read and which he says isn't good enough to submit anywhere.

Thank you, Mrs. Wall, and you can tell your husband for us that his home front is in good hands and holding solidly. Incidentally, we'd like to have a look at that novel. Never trust an author's judgment of his own work has been our motto for years!

JACK MURRAY, whose article on Florida's Taylor County Cattle War appears on page 80 this month, says by way of introduction—

There isn't much to tell about myself. I

(Continued on page 8)

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(Continued from page 6)

was born in Williamstown Vt. in 1893 and was educated at Norwich University, Northfield, Vt., and Meredith College, Zanesville, Ohio. My first job after leaving school was on the engineering corps of the Pennsylvania Lines west of Pittsburgh, where I was employed for about eight years. Was later connected with the Philadelphia Rubber Co., Akron, Ohio; Tidewater Cypress Co., Dunnellen, Fla.; associate editor and advertising manager, Wand Publications, which included Southern Lumber Journal, Southern Hotel Journal and the Southeastern Drug Journal; associate editor, Jacksonville American; Office Manager, Bahamas-Cuban Co., Norman's Castle, Great Abaco, BWI; Aycock-Holley Lumber Co., Jacksonville. For many years served as Florida correspondent for a string of trade publications which included: American Lumberman, Chicago; Southern Lumberman, Nashville; New York Lumber Trade Journal, New York; Automotive Daily News, New York; United Press, Atlanta office.

Have a married daughter and three sons in the service. The eldest, John Jr., is a paratrooper somewhere in Italy; Wallace is in England; Ted has about completed his training as a pilot at Randolph Field. A brother, Lieut. W. C. Murray, is a radio technician assigned to the air forces somewhere in the South Pacific. As to current activities, I am employed by a wholesale grain and feed concern with headquarters in Cincinnati. Tried to enlist in the Merchant Marine but they turned me down on physical examination. Served as air raid warden and hold merit medal and 1,000-hour service bar. This is about all about myself that matters, and the less said the better I will be satisfied.

As to the story itself, I spent several years in the swamp country of West Florida, and became intimately acquainted with John Connell at that time. He was employed as a millwright at a neighboring mill and we hunted deer and wild turkeys together in the swamps and hammocks of Taylor, Levy and Fayette Counties. Connell is a veritable mine of information on historical facts and folk lore of West Florida.

Incidentally, the Brandons and the Towles have all gone to their various rewards, none of the boys having sired any children; or at least any that they claimed. Jensie Brandon, *née* Lanier, died of pneumonia many years ago and left no progeny. There may be some of the younger generation of Padgetts scattered about. Strangely enough, these Taylor County natives are rather proud of their picturesque forbears, and the fact that "grandpap was shot in the act of rustling cattle or stealing hawgs" causes them no embarrassment; quite the contrary. Cornell is a descendant of an early pioneer and rancher, and a typical "cracker," married at the tender age of sixteen. He is a machinist and electrician and until he entered the service for the duration, operated his own machine shop in Perry.

JIM KJELGAARD adds the following interesting notations to his tale of the pigeon-butcher on page 64—

"Pigeoner" is the result of wondering what happened to the last big flock of passenger pigeons. Of course there cannot be much doubt that they were brought to the point of extermination by professional pigeoners, who operated as does the guy in the story. Still, it seems reasonable that the pigeoners didn't catch them all and the last big flock was probably destroyed by natural causes. It's my guess that they actually did perish in a storm over the Great Lakes; it is known that more than one flock went down that way.

This ties in with an Indian legend that came to me tenth-hand and by word of mouth. The legend says that the Indians were at the point of starvation, and there was no food in the land. They made the proper supplications to their Manitou, whereupon a mighty, sweeping storm arose. As it grew in fury and intensity, each drop of rain became a pigeon and when the storm subsided there was a feathered horde that literally darkened the skies. The Manitou gave them into the care of the Indians, promising that they should be food for as long as they were needed. But, when they were needed no more, they should be taken back into the storm.

Out of that grew the tale.

R. A. EMBERG, several of whose Great Lakes stories have appeared in these pages from time to time, writes to comment on a "sweetwater" article by a fellow writer which we printed a few months ago, and to enclose a picture which we reproduce below. Mr. Emberg says—

Re "Sea Spies of the South" in the September, '44, issue. Well, I had that yarn just about written, but Mr. H. G. Russell made such a good job of it I want to congratulate him. I thought perhaps he and other *Adventure* readers might be interested in the cruiser *Michigan* which James Yates Beall and his fellow-conspirators intended to capture.

The *Michigan* was the first iron (not steel) ship to be launched on the Great Lakes. Her ribs, keel and plates were rolled at Pittsburgh in 1842 and transported to Erie, Penn., where she was built. She was schooner-rigged with three masts. I believe, although I am not quite sure, that her career as a commissioned vessel of the United States Navy had no equal in length of continuous service. I do know that she was commissioned in 1843 and was still in active service in 1921, although her name had been changed to *Wolverine*.

(Continued on page 10)

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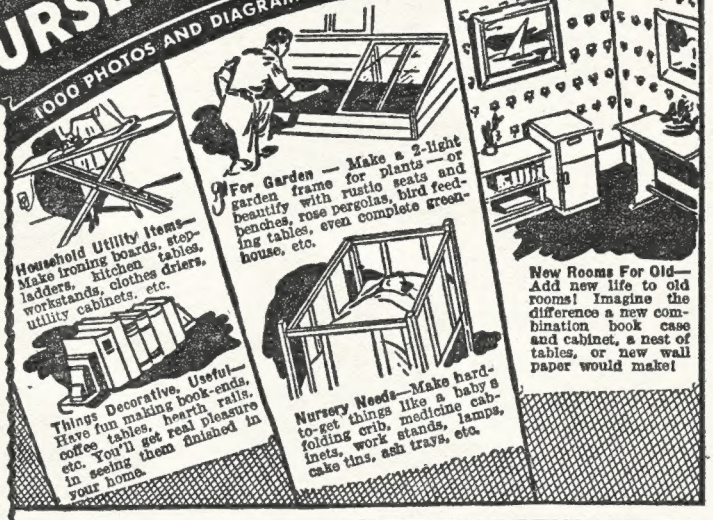
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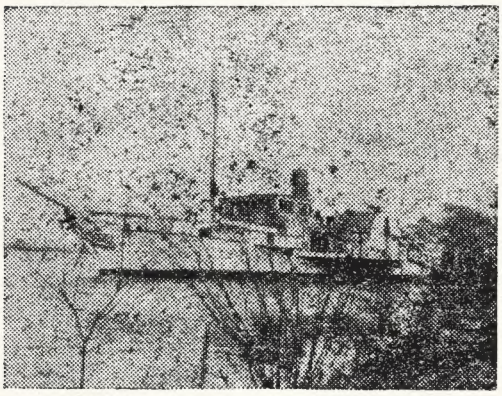
(Continued from page 8)

And in 1921 her home port was still Erie, Penn. This writer has been aboard the ship many times.



The Michigan

In some correspondence between myself and Mr. Walter C. Mallery of Erie, who was kind enough to comment on one of my stories in *Adventure*, I asked him if the old ship was still at Erie. Apparently she has come to the end that all good ships face eventually. Shorn of her rakish spars, perhaps only a shell, she lies in the mud of Misery Bay (see Carl Lane's "Fleet in the Forest"). I am enclosing a photograph Mr. Mallery sent me of the old cruiser as she is at present.

One of the many exploits of the *Michigan* was the subjugation of King Jesse Strang's Kingdom on Beaver Island in Lake Michigan in 1850. Actually, Strang, the dissident Mormon, was crowned king of the island, all of which didn't fit in very well with the American idea, and the *Michigan* was sent to Beaver Island to dethrone him, which job was handled expeditiously. A malcontent subject with a grudge against His Majesty took immediate advantage of the dethronement and filled the king's carcass with lead as he was being led captive to the cruiser. Oh, yes, it killed him, too!

AFTER reading the August issue, the author of "Where Nests the Watersnake" which ran in these pages earlier in the year, writes from his home in Ohio—

I want to tell you how much I enjoyed Royal Ornan Shreve's article, "Symmes' Hole." Hamilton, Symmes' burial place, is only eight miles from here; Monroe, incidentally, is in the old Symmes' Purchase, the tract financed by young Symmes' uncle. To get back to the Hole—I'm sending, for your stupefaction, a picture of the memorial mentioned by Shreve.

Which brings me to Capt. Symmes' sponsor—Col. Dick Johnson, Senator and Indian fighter. A friend of mine, some years back, in compiling a history of one of Ohio's northern counties ran into this gem. Dick Johnson, as Shreve says, was inordinately proud of his action at the Battle of the Thames. He made up a little song for drinking in taverns and to sing to himself as he rode alone on horseback. It was:

Ripsy, rampsy, humpsy, dumpsy,
I, Dick Johnson, killed Tecumseh!

Cordially,
—Merle Constiner,
Monroe, Ohio.

The Symmes Memorial

Thanks, Merle, for the picture of the memorial, hole and all, as well as the couplet which we have already taught to a neighboring six-year-old with an ear for nonsense rhymes. She uses it to accompany herself skipping rope—K.S.W.

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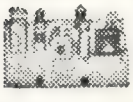

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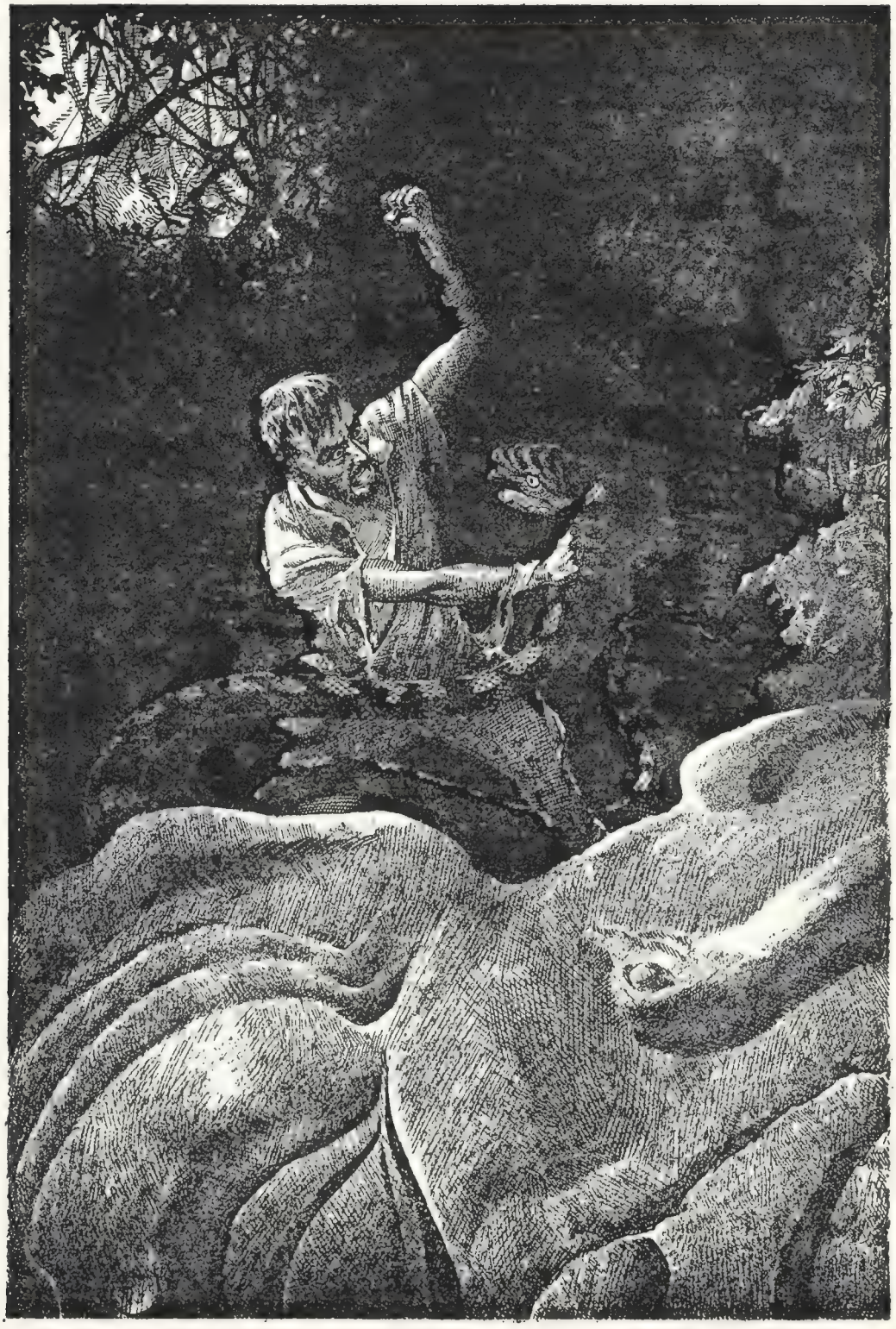


THE GREAT STONE GODS

By

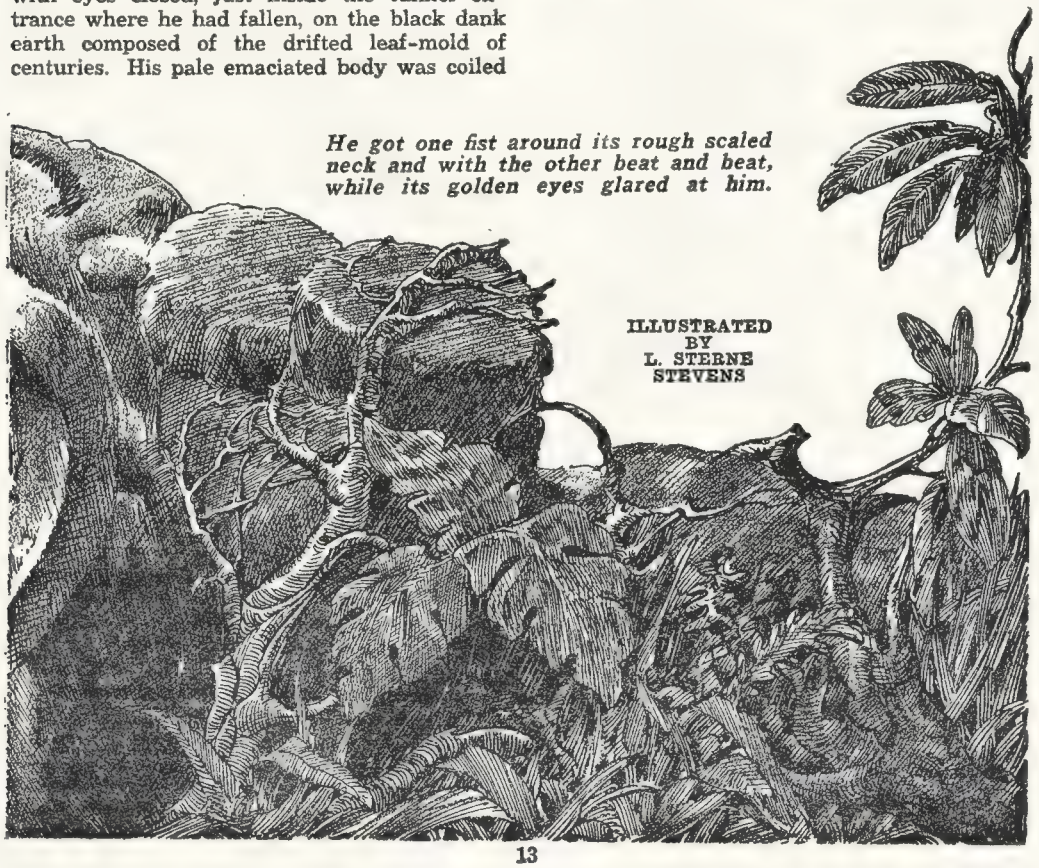
JOEL TOWNSLEY ROGERS

AT FOUR o'clock, on every side, the little drums began to beat in the green depths of the jungle. There had been no preliminary indication today, as always, that They were there—no glimpse nor voice nor sign.

But suddenly and all together, like an orchestra of cicadas at the signal of some tiny insect baton, they had started up their late afternoon throbbing once again.

Esmerado muttered in his sleep. He lifted a hand to flick an insect crawling over his eyelids. For a moment more he remained lying with eyes closed, just inside the tunnel entrance where he had fallen, on the black dank earth composed of the drifted leaf-mold of centuries. His pale emaciated body was coiled up in the semi-gloom like a long white annelid worm.

He had been having a flood of bright and shifting dreams. First he had dreamed that Greer and Grepperson had come back, flying a great shining plane that dropped down as lightly as a dragonfly into the jungle. That they were loading up the plane with huge boxes of carved emeralds and antique gold, and soaring swiftly upward and away through a vast blue cloudless sky—over clean sparkling rivers, snow-capped mountains, over great blue distant seas. Then he had dreamed that he was



He got one fist around its rough scaled neck and with the other beat and beat, while its golden eyes glared at him.

ILLUSTRATED BY L. STERNE STEVENS

riding on a sleek prancing horse, garbed in a resplendent gold-braided white uniform with a red sash about his middle, along the boulevards of the capital, at the head of a great army of ten thousand men, all beautifully armed and accoutered, rifles gleaming, bandoliers on shoulders, bare feet slapping the pavement in even ranks. Bands played and cannon boomed salutes, and the way beside him was lined with cheering throngs tossing flowers into his path, and banners everywhere were flaunting, "Esmerado! Hail to the conqueror, Esmerado!"

Next he was sitting down to banquets of oxen roasted whole, with fountains of champagne sparkling, with music and bright lights. Lovely women all around him were clinging and murmuring soft words to him; and still the glorious bands and cheering were all around him, and he was slapping a great belly and laughing, laughing, because it was all so damned wonderful. . . .

But he was lying here gaunt and alone and drenched with sweat in the narrow underground gloom, and there were only the inhuman chittering and screaming voices of the jungle outside, and the podding beat of those little drums.

Muttering, he rolled over and coiled up in a tighter ball, trying to catch the thread of joy again. But the dreams had gone from him, and his eyeballs burned. His brain was too wakeful and aware.

He opened his sanded lids. With a gaunt glare he stared at the great polished stone blocks which formed the narrow walls on each side of him and the low roof above, listening to that small peaspod sound.

"Lice!" he mouthed.

His vision still rocked a little. A sense of floating lassitude and timelessness was in him, as if nothing were worth a care. He felt almost as if he had got himself gloriously drunk, though there was no intoxicant here. Perhaps he was just recovering from another bout of rotten fever, or a giant mapipire had bitten him again, though he had thought their venom could harm him no more.

Something stirred on the dark earth floor a foot from his face. He was alert in the instant —terribly alert. It was a great black hairy spider, with tiny red pin-points of eyes, dragging its crooked legs with slow deliberate motion. The same insect, no doubt, that he had flicked from his lids with an instinctive gesture in his half-awakening. Some kind of giant tarantula, and hellish enough if it got his eyes.

Motionless as a crocodile, he watched it. He snapped out his hand to crush it, but his timing was off. The spider leaped and eluded him. It scuttled off into some crack between the great stone blocks, out of sight.

I must be drunk, Esmerado thought, as he lay back once more on the dank earth.

THAT was it, of course. He remembered now. There had been the giant maguey, ten feet high and with a twelve-foot spread of thick spiny leaves, which he had come upon ten days ago growing in the jungle near the rusted engine and landing gear of the plane —a place that he didn't visit much any more.

The huge plant had been on the point of bursting into flower, and oozing with aguamiel. He had clambered his way up into it, and had cut off the bud, and then had girdled the stalk a little above the ground. Without tubs or containers to collect the sap, he had left it to ferment in the stalk itself as it rotted.

He had gone back to it this morning, carrying his old army canteen slung over his shoulder. Long before he had reached it he had known that the operation had been successful. The sickish sour-milk odor of the fermented honey-water had permeated the air halfway there, and clouds of insects had been swarming in heavy drunken flight. He had found the whole monstrous nightmare plant a mass of slimy putrefaction, crushing around him like rotted cabbage ooze as he waded into it. But the stem core, when he reached it, had ben brimming with strong potable madre pulque, the mother of all pulque fuertes. He must have soaked his head in it. He felt the reeking stickiness in his beard and hair, all over him, as he lay motionless a moment more.

It had been his first drink since he had finished off his flask of Trinidad rum with Greer and Grepperson, just before they had set out to get help. And that had been a long time ago now. They had a barrel of whiskey and cases of champagne on their list of supplies to bring back. Still he had somewhat lost his head for liquor, it was apparent. He had always had a head like iron, a barrel stomach. He had always held his feet when the last man was under the table.

He was just as good as he had ever been, but he was just a little underfed, and had got out of the habit. He was still Esmerado, and he could still drink and eat and love and fight the world down. There was no man to equal him. But the pulque had hit him, no question of it. He had hazy impressions of singing wild gaucho songs, of shouting and staggering around, of trying to slap vague shadows of Greer and Grepperson on the back, of trying to embrace the sylphlike shapes of laughing women, all eluding him and fading from him—of falling down and getting to his feet with difficulty. He had no memory of how he had got back home. He must have been just able to make the tunnel entrance here before collapsing.

His spine felt cold as he pictured himself falling out there, unable to rise again, lying drunk and helpless, unable to move a hand,

He sat up shakily. Better not try that again.

His skull was split with great throbbing waves for the moment, with his change of position, but his brain was awake and keen. He had imagined that he heard the little drums —and so he had.

Four o'clock, he thought. There They were at it again, at Their favorite hour. It had been weeks since he had heard Their little throbbing. He had almost begun to think that They had gone away for good at last, seeking better hunting grounds and less miasmal jungle, as he had thought before. But he would not let himself be fooled again. Beating or silent, They were always there.

He scratched his skeleton ribs and the gray fur on his chest and beneath his armpits. Squatting on his bony hams, he pulled aside a slit in the curtain of bushes and creepers which grew over the rectangular entrance—and which seemed to have grown doubly thick and heavy during the little while he had been asleep.

With red-rimmed gaze, watchful and challenging, he peered forth at the green shadowy world outside.

Rain had poured during the afternoon, it seemed. The dregs of it were still dripping from the matted strangle of interlaced tree limbs and vines which roofed the world a hundred feet above. The air was steaming hot. Wraiths of mist drifted in the empty spaces of the glade in front of him, and every leaf was drenched. The massed green shadows on the opposite side of the glade seemed to have grown heavier and crept nearer, as if during the day the whole teeming jungle, like the curtain of foliage in front of him, had doubled in density.

All the ordinary sounds of the wilderness were magnified, as usual after rain. Parakeets screamed and flashed their wings in the lofty foliage above. Troops of white-faced monkeys went swinging and hurtling with loon howls of laughter upon their half-glimpsed aerial way. Somewhere in the underbrush not far off a herd of little tusked pigs was rooting and pushing with frequent grunts. Great pallid butterflies swam in the windless air above the huge ropes of orchidaceous flowers, with slow beatings of their wings so heavy and profound that they seemed almost audible as they struck the air. A billion billion breeds of other insects buzzed and droned and ticked and creaked and hummed.

It seemed to Esmerado that, in the hot, still, steaming air, he could even hear the spotted tiger's yawn, stretching itself in its lazy sprawl on a tree limb overhanging the sluggish brown river half a mile away. Could hear the flick and splash of the swift cannibal fish leaping from the water's surface there. And the torpid stirring of the old crocodile down in the scum-

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my waters of the swamp, trailing triple ripples from his gnarled eyes and snout as he crawled sluggishly on the muddy bottom. The skittering of the ant, the sliding of the serpent on the ground.

All the myriad screams and laughter and hunger cries, and cries of pain and rage and death of the green world of substanceless and intangible shadows, as well as the small witless chittering sounds which had no meaning at all, were out there, as forever. They were all such familiar sounds that—excepting those which in certain circumstances and near at hand might warn of instant danger to him—they had become no more than a kind of ringing silence to Esmerado ordinarily, just as the sounds of a great city become a silence to a city-dweller. Yet, like a city-dweller, when he put his attention to it he could separate them and identify each one individually, and almost put his finger on the spot where they had originated—within a few yards, at most. At least, he believed he could. But he had never been able to locate those damned little drums.

Pod! pod! pod! pod!

Little drums of dried gourds, of stretched lizards' skins and monkeys' skulls, or whatever they were made of. Throbbing here, there, and everywhere. And nowhere. No louder than insect sounds.

"Lice!" Esmerado croaked at Them with twisting lips. "Dirty sneaking little lice!"

There was nothing to be seen of Them, of course. There never was, any more.

ONCE, at the beginning, he remembered, he had glimpsed one of Them peering at him for an immobile instant from behind a bush. And there had been that other one flying through the trees. That had been a long time ago, though, only a day or two after Greer and Grepperson had gone, when he had been first alone. Before he had known that there was anything human or subhuman existing within a hundred miles. Or anything like Them in the whole world.

He, as well as Greer and Grepperson, had heard Their little drums, of course, before then. They had beat them a great deal at first, when he thought back on it. They had beat them regularly every day, and with more persistency, it seemed to him, and for a longer time. There had, perhaps, been more of Them, too, though he couldn't be sure of that. Anyway, from the first day, he and Greer and Grepperson had noted that little sound, beginning just at four o'clock in the afternoons. They had always paused, when they heard it whatever they were doing, turning their heads and looking around them everywhere, for it was a sound that could not be ignored.

But none of them had suggested that it might be human. They had told each other that it was only another of the endless jungle voices, bird or lizard or insect—a little more monotonous, perhaps, a little more irritating in its dull persistence than the million other voices, a little more malignant and mocking and obscene, but of the same insensate kind. If any of them had had any other thought about it, he had kept it to himself.

He remembered the beating that afternoon when Greer and Grepperson had started out, leaving him with their luggage salvaged from the plane, with what canned food remained and the plane's Lewis gun, as well as his sword and pistol, to keep guard over the narrow tunnel entrance which led in through the great ancient, buried blocks whose secrets they had guessed a little.

"It may be a week, or it may be three months, General," Greer had said. "Depending on how tough we find the going, and how long before one of us reaches some native village. Grepperson is going to head up, beyond the headwaters and across the mountains if he has to, and I'll head down. One way or the other, we're bound to come on some kind of native life before very long. Can you hold out all right alone?"

"I'll be here when you get back," said Esmerado.

"You know the things to watch out for," said Grepperson. "Bugs and snakes. Well—everything. It's a damned green hell. A blank space on the map. No man has ever set foot here for probably thousands of years. All the more reason to feel pretty sure that we've got something when we dig it out."

"We'll bring back mules, drills and dynamite, and plenty of natives," said Greer, his eyes gleaming for a moment in his big hard face. "We'll clear a field where we can land a cargo plane. There's stuff here, all right. Tons and tons. More than anybody has ever seen in the world before."

"It won't be long," said Grepperson. "Take care of yourself, General."

"We'll be back," Greer emphasized, "maybe even before any of us think."

"I'll be here," Esmerado had repeated. . . .

Yes, the little drums had been beating that afternoon. He had heard them for a good half hour after the two big stalwart fellows, in their grease-stained coveralls and flying helmets, their guns strapped to their thighs, had looked back at him with their arms lifted in salute and vanished in the green shadows across the glade. They, as they progressed on their journey, had continued, perhaps, to hear the little drums until darkness fell. . . .

It was strange how he had thought he had seen the two big fellows today, elusive and transparent, with those swarms of other shadowy shapes around the great rotting maguey.

IT HAD been two or three days after Greer and Grepperson had gone that he had had his first glimpse of one of Them.

The time had been twilight, when the shadows were growing black. He had crawled down to the pool a hundred feet away, dragging his leg in the splints which Greer had whittled for it from one of the plane's struts, to quench his fevered thirst and fill his canteen against the night. As he started to put down his face he had glimpsed, across the unrippled water's surface, crouching behind a bush and staring motionless at him, that incredible and abhorrent apparition.

A small naked body no bigger than a two-year old child's, a little wrinkled doglike face as old as time. Its muggy yellow eyes were half veiled behind a falling fringe of reddish-black, oily hair. For a long instant Esmerado had seen it staring at him with its forlorn and dismal look, while he lay leaden. He had even discerned the red topknot that it wore, like a small bird's feather, and in its hand, clutched against its brown oiled side, its blowgun and little spear.

It had made no sound, just crouched there mute, with an abysmal silence. Esmerado himself, in that instant of staring startlement, had felt his own throat constricted, as if struck with a paralyzing poison. With a wrenching of his vocal cords, he had opened his mouth then to yell, grabbing for his gun on his thigh at the same instant—he had always worn his gun in those days, and been prodigal of cartridges. But before he could snatch it out and level it, at the shadow of his gesture and his yell, the little wrinkled face was gone.

It was as if it had never even been there. Wiped out in the shadows, the place where it had been was empty, and he was staring at a bush and nothing more. He might even have convinced himself that it had been a complete hallucination, born of the burning fever which had started in him that day, except for the detail with which he had seen it, down to the tuft of red in its greasy hair. Only it hadn't been a red bird's feather, as he realized afterwards, but the love-knot of red baby ribbon which Grepperson had worn as a lucky charm tied to the loop of his big hard crash-helmet, which had been on his head as he went away.

The ribbon had doubtless pulled off on a bush as Grepperson forced his way through, without his being aware of its loss, and the little animal had found it and been attracted by its bright color to adorn his own filthy nakedness. The item of the ribbon had no special significance, Esmerado told himself. It merely served as a particular detail of evidence that the apparition had been real.

He had never seen the little wrinkled face again, so dismal and so horrifying, though months later he may have glimpsed another one of Them—this time, however, even more fleetingly.

His fractured femur had knit by them, and he had begun to learn his way around. He had been out to bag a pig, squatting in the crotch of a great mahogany twenty feet above the ground, pistol in hand, waiting for one of the snuffling, vile-tempered little rooters which he could hear foraging in the nearby underbrush to move closer to the tree base and into sight. The time had been near twilight as before; the singing of many daytime insects had ceased and a stillness hung over the jungle.

He had been there an hour, or perhaps two, without the movement of an eyelid, merged against the tree bark in his khaki rags, waiting with the crocodile patience which he had learned. Suddenly, by chance or instinct, he had glanced upward, just in time to glimpse from the corner of an eye a naked little brown shadow leaping from limb tip to limb tip across a space in the limitless green vaults fifty feet or so above his head—a fleeting brown shadow with long reddish-black hair, clutching something in one arm. His gun this time had been already in his fist, his finger on the trigger, and with a shout he had fired up at it instantly.

There had been only that flashing glimpse, and it might have been only a monkey or some kind of small cat, of course. But he could have sworn that it was a diminutive human female, and a young one, carrying her tiny infant against her breast.

There had been no scream or wail after his shot, not even a rustling of the foliage; and no stricken little brown animal, losing its hold, had come tumbling down from the high green shadows while he watched. There had been only silence, and the great unstirring leaves. But he couldn't have missed completely, for after a while there had been a few red drops which had dripped down from a branch of an adjacent tree, and on the ground where they fell the voracious white ants were swarming instantly, while the great pallorous butterflies, like ghostly vampires in the twilight, came drifting down to sup.

It was the silence following his shot that made him feel sure it had been one of Them, for if it had been a hurt cat it would have screamed, or if a monkey it would have wailed and sobbed. With bared gums he had put his pistol away, and climbed down from the tree.

But that had been long ago. Since then he had not seen one of Them, not once. Only Their little thorn darts imbedded at times in a tree bole. Only a slowly straightening leaf or blade of grass where perhaps Their little feet had trod. Only now and again in the late afternoons, at sporadic and irregular intervals of days, the sound of Their little drums.

CHAPTER II

THE FOUR O'CLOCK DRUMS

IT HAD been much longer ago than Esmerado could remember since his watch had stopped running. And in the sunless depths of the jungle, beneath that unbroken roof of inextricably matted foliage which shut off every vestige of the sky, there was no way to mark off one hour from another, nor morning from afternoon.

But during the first weeks and months when he had still kept track of the hours, and even before Greer and Grepperson had gone away, he had timed the podding of those little drums as beginning, on the days they beat, always at the dot of four in the afternoon, and lasting thereafter anywhere from twenty minutes up to dark.

What started them off, what stopped them, how they hit upon the minute, or why they beat, he didn't know. Perhaps They didn't know Themselves, either. It had nothing to do with him any more, he had decided, if it ever had. That was all he knew, and about even that much he might be wrong.

But if he could make a guess, it was perhaps some vague vestigial memory stirring in Them, some tenuous and inchoate urge down through the thousands of years, still calling Them to the observance of a lost and long-forgotten rite which once, at this hour of day, had been carried out in honor of the great stone gods. Perhaps at this precise time the sun had touched a certain point on the summit of the great temple pyramid, a golden marker on the sacred sun-dial or a flashing jewel-light in one of the great god's emerald eyes; and at that moment, beside the stone altar on which the sacrificial maiden lay flower-decked and bound, amidst a thunder of great drums and the exultant screaming of the watching multitude, the high priest had lifted up the stone knife and plunged it down. . . .

The altar of the gods was tumbled. The huge drum-shaped stone sun-dial, forty feet in diameter and twenty high, with the hours and seasons and the records of the years carved on its surface and around its circumference in hieroglyphs of serpents and demon figures, was chipped and shattered, its terrible legends no longer decipherable, all broken into shards. The gods themselves had fallen from their great stone thrones, and lay buried beneath earth. The huge smooth obsidian blocks of which the temple had been built—as smooth as glass, tons in weight, quarried and transported here and polished to jeweled accuracy and set in place only the great lost gods knew how—had been heaved apart at their precise and perfect junctures in the slow unrelenting grip of the jungle, and lay hidden beneath the thousands of years of leaf-mold which had piled up, century by century.

The earthquake had shaken, and the root still grew. The place where all those great things had been had leveled down to a low formless mound, indefinite of outline, overgrown by vast trees like all the rest, indiscernible from the surrounding jungle except by careful examination. No stone had remained in sight. There were only fragmentary galleries, tunnels, half-filled-in vaulted chambers vast and deep beneath the ground, which remained of the great pyramid of the gods which had once reared on high. But that it had once stood here, Esmerado knew.

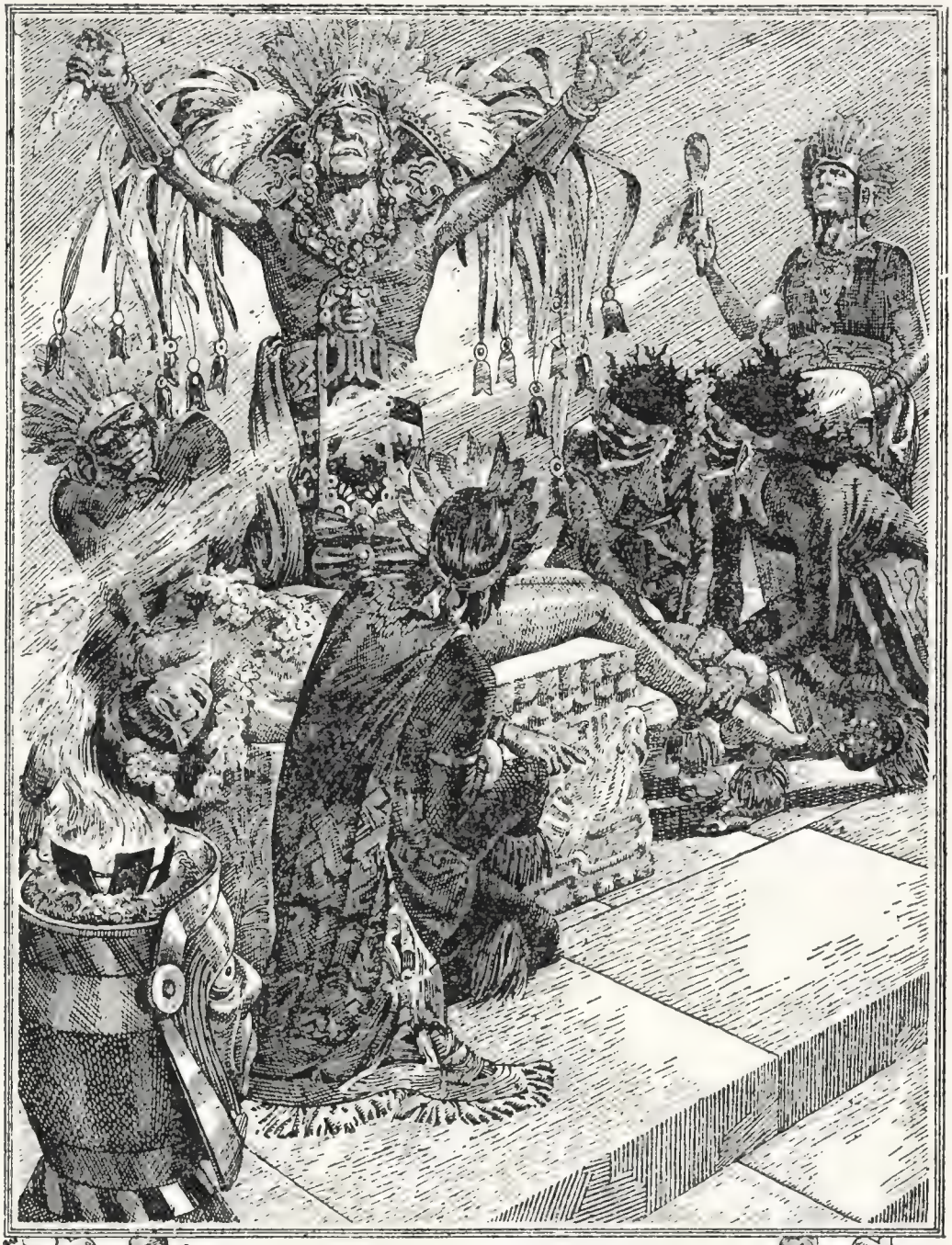
He was the master of a part, at least, of all those golden mysteries. He was no bug-eyed archeologist, to spend his life in patient disinterment of the relics of dead civilizations. He was Esmerado the Conqueror, the leader of armies, the taker of cities, the great military genius. He had had no particular tools to work with, either, but a long time of eager tunneling, of sounding and calculation, of laborious hand excavation with knife and claw, had disclosed to him, in worm's-eye view, the general outline of where that great four-square temple pyramid had been, with its serried ranks of platforms mounting up and up to the high summit and the great towering gods.

Some he had discovered, and the rest he'd guessed. In those days there had been no jungle, in all likelihood, but the great yellow burning tropic sun had blazed in naked sky above by day, and the great white weeping stars by night. There might have been a city filled with teeming hundreds of thousands, or even millions, all around—streets and plazas, aqueducts and fountains, the shops of goldsmiths, weavers, potters, lapidaries and other artisans, bright villas surrounded by luxuriant gardens and irrigated groves, buildings of government, the barracks of the soldiery. The metropolis of a great civilized people, the capital of a great and mighty empire. Perhaps the greatest city, the greatest empire, that there had ever been.

And here, at the very center of the vast powerful city, the great pyramidal temple of the gods. Then, when the sun had struck its instant point of four in the afternoon, from the platform at the summit the mighty drums would thunder out with a great booming beat, over the city, over the massed hundreds of thousands on the temple steps and in the great plaza below, while high up the priest struck down his sacred knife.

And the beating, beating, beating of the great thundering drums, until those quivering limbs lay still. . . .

Now the green surging jungle had come over



At the precise time the sun touched one of the great god's emerald eyes, there was a thunder of drums, and the high priest lifted up the stone knife above the flower-decked maiden.

everything, and the gods were fallen and the priests were dead and the great war drums were rotted and the great people who had lived and flourished here were no more. Their very name and history was no more, where they had come from or how they had died.

There were only the little people, wrinkled, filthy, furtive, subhuman, naked and houseless in the jungle. Still at the same hour, erratically now and again in the passing shadowy days, whenever They happened to think about it in Their small senseless brains, They beat Their little peaspod drums—over the thousands of years keeping up that much of the forgotten rite, as of something that They had dreamed of with a troubled dream, or that ghosts had inspired Them to do.

At least that was as satisfying a guess as any, and more agreeable than the thought of celebrations over the carcass of some bloated pig found in the jungle, and dark gorging little feasts.

"Lice!" Esmerado croaked impotently. "Cockroaches!"

They were still there, and They would always be there, beating Their senseless little drums when Their tiny brains remembered, when the spirit moved Them, to great lost forgotten things which They had never known. But Esmerado did not think that he would see one of Them again until he died.

HE LET the curtain of foliage bend back in place again. There was nothing to do but to retreat out of earshot. From the loamy earth beside him he picked up his canteen, which he had taken down with him to the great maguey. Its rotted canvas cover was sticky with the liquor he had dipped it in; but the cork was in it, and when he shook it, it was full.

He hung it around his neck. Turning on soles and knuckles, he began to make his way farther in, back toward his den at the summit of the buried temple, moving slowly on all limbs, like a great gaunt albino ape, or like a huge white termite creeping through its weeviled tunnel underground.

The way in was through a haphazard and tortuous series of interstices between the huge jumbled buried blocks. Turning angular corners, climbing and descending again, Esmerado made his way over and between the huge polished surfaces—some of them steeply sloping, some more nearly level—at times with ample room about him, at times squeezing through narrow spaces, with the blocks pressing in close beside him or above. Devious as the way was, he threaded it automatically, and could have made it in his sleep—he did it constantly in his dreams.

The way worked upward gradually, going in toward the rising center of the mound. After a hundred feet or so it was blocked by a perpendicular surface of glass-sleek stone, with no more than a three-inch triangle of free space at a lower corner, where one of the massive monoliths lay square athwart any further passage, a seemingly impassable wall.

This had been the dead end at which Greer and Grepperson had stuck. Already they had found, back in the leaf-mold near the entrance of the buried stones, a perfume vase or amphora of pure heavy gold, as Esmerado remembered it, and various runic-carved emeralds and perhaps other relics farther in—enough to have made them more than a little wild. But here the exploration had ended for them, and they had thought they would have to have drills and dynamite to go farther. Yet when Esmerado now, with an accustomed gesture, inserted two fingers into the small triangular space at the lower corner of the huge stone, it stirred and began to move.

It had been only after weeks or months, how long he didn't remember, of futile pushing and heaving, of clawing and scratching and striking his empty fists with despairing curses against the huge sleek stone—efforts which had made him exhausted and bloody—that he had finally discovered, by sheerest chance, that the block rested in such a way amidst the jumble that its tons of weight were balanced on a razor edge, on some other block or blocks below. It swung upward and over now to his finger pull, pivoting with balanced weight and counterweight, like a giant drawbridge which a child can swing open with its hand.

Esmerado held the block above him, with arm thrust upward stiffly from his shoulder, while he wormed along upon a hip for a dozen feet or so beneath its tilted side. Then, clear of it, he released it, letting it sink back in place behind him with a ponderous shuddering thud.

The passageway was straight and more ample now, and he could stand erect. There were low, deep-worn steps beneath his feet. It was a segment of a gallery staircase of the temple, ascending from the next-to-top stage to the summit, which had remained partially intact.

Above him, beyond the stairs' top, a small blue flickering flame gave a tiny light in the darkness. He mounted the steps and emerged through a doorway. Now he was in a roofed chamber beneath the tangled roots of the jungle, where the small flame, burning from a heap of ashes in the center of the floor, reflected its light on walls of dull mirroring gold.

COUGHING, Esmerado moved toward the little flame and knelt beside it. He fed it economically with a couple of handfuls of rotted pithwood chunks, bits of dead brush, and ravelings of dried peaty moss from

a heap of fuel beside it, and warmed his bony hands as the new stuff caught.

It was a fire which he had kept burning continually since the time, a few months after Greer and Grepperson had gone, when he had found his matches coming to an end. For a long while the preservation of it had been a primary obligation of his existence. A good part of his days had been spent in collecting fuel for it, scrap by scrap—alert and foraging everywhere, when he was outside, for any bit of partially dry combustible stuff in the eternal rotting dampness of the jungle. Always he endeavored to keep at least two weeks' supply ahead, in case of incapacity.

Once, long ago, when he had been very sick, the first time a mapipire had bitten him, he had been terrified that the small flame was going out. He had lain in a fever and out of his head for how long he didn't know, perhaps only a day, perhaps much more, on the couch in his den here whither he had just managed to crawl.

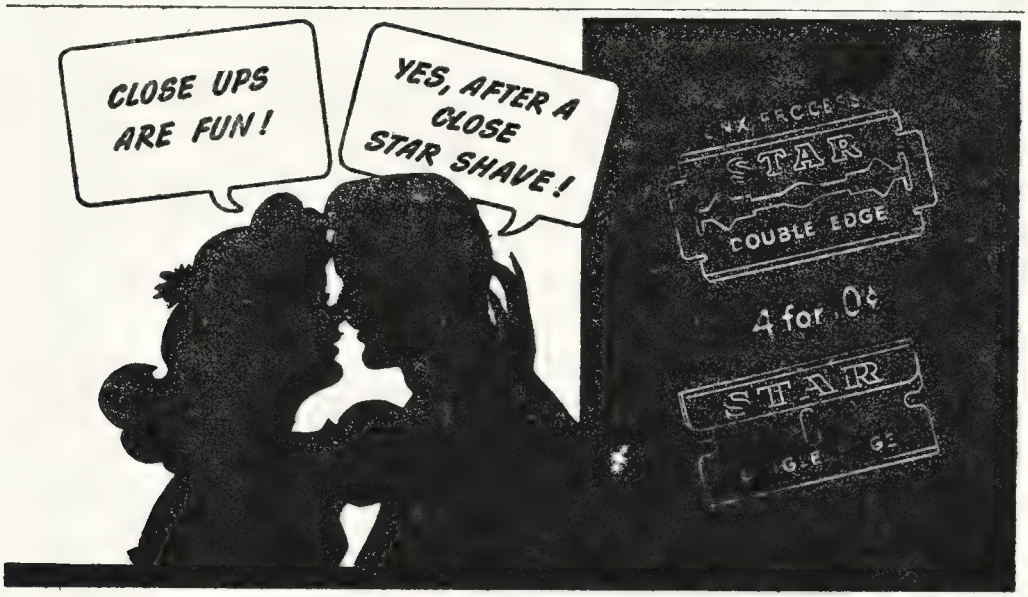
The terrible hemolytic poison was in him, agonizingly breaking down and corroding every corpuscle of his blood and flesh. How he had managed to survive five minutes he hadn't known, except by supposing that it must have been only one fang that had got him, and that the terrible serpent must have been already largely devenomed by some previous strike which it had just made.

As it was, he had gone out of his head with the hellish pain. When he had been aware of anything again, the underground darkness was all about him, the fire in its heap of ashes had burned down to one small blue ghostly flame, no bigger than a match.

There had been no strength in him; he could not feel his own limbs lying cold; only a faint slow spasmodic struggling of his heart remained still in his breast. But somehow he had managed to roll off onto the floor, to get hold of the bag containing his papers and unsnap the lock, and with stuff from it—bundles of letters, silky banknotes, newspaper clippings, whatever came to hand—to feed the pale blue flickering flame until it was again a blaze, and there was heat in it.

That had been the nearest he had ever been to death, perhaps. Nothing could ever bring him so low again, no poison in the jungle. The flame would never die. Yet for months afterward, he remembered, he would awake from sweating nightmares, as he lay on his great couch beside it in the night, fearful that in spite of all his care the small fire had died while he slept, this time to a blackness eternal and complete. Then, springing up with a cry, the terror would slowly subside in him as he saw it still burning.

There had been no actual need of a fire any more by that time, of course. The fear which had at first impelled him to preserve it with all care—a fear that without it he would be unable to cook whatever game he killed and so perish of starvation—had soon ceased to have any significance. It had not taken him long to form the habit of eating his food raw and heat-ripened where and as he found it, without too much daintiness. Long ago he had even lost all taste and desire for the cooked foods of civilization, except in dreams, and his system might have found them nauseating. Nor did he have need any longer of a fire for light, for his eyes by that time had grown accustomed, like the eyes of a gopher, to the subterranean darkness almost as well



as to the sunless shadows of the green world outside. But it had been a kind of symbol to him. He had felt that it was like the meager flame of his own life, and that so long as it continued to burn the life would still remain in him, but that if it died he would also die.

And the thought of death had been a terror to him, beyond what it is to most men, even. Never to know again the crowded lively towns, the music and the lights and noise, the clanging streetcars and the speeding automobiles, the dance halls and the gambling hells, the fiestas and the bull-fights. Never to ride gaudily uniformed at the head of his victorious barefoot army along the boulevards of conquered towns; never again to hear the roaring cheers, to know the riotous carefree heat of strong sweet rum and the bright tantalizing smiles, the lips and arms of women. Never all of that again, but to die forever lost and nameless, blotted out, unmarked, forgotten, in the foul corruption of the carrion-haunted jungle —he, who had been such a great man, who had conquered town after town, had half the country beneath his heel from the river shore in the west up to the edges of Salino in the east, who had had the power of life and death, and whose name had made headlines in the newspapers—he, Esmerado, so great and terrible and strong.

Oh, let the fire continue to burn, though meagerly! Let it keep on giving off its little light and heat, never fading completely, never quite all cold and dead, till Greer and Grep-person came back on roaring wings to take him out of this green rotting shadowy death and back into the golden world of sunlight and joy and fame and power again, with gold and jewels scattering from his hands, and all the world to buy. It would be too abominable, too hideous and vile, to go out alone here in the horrible shadows. And after that, the little drums. . . . . .

For a long moment Esmerado shivered, crouching beside the built-up flame.

"Swine! Lice! Dogs and female dogs!" he mouthed at nothing, then croaked a laugh—at himself. At how, at first, for so many months, he had nursed the little flame that way in anxious terror. One night he had decided to let it go out. But it had not gone out. There was some seepage of gas, he had found, exuding up through a crack in the floor beneath the fire, from the great charnel vaults below, which was just enough to keep the flame lit with a blue flickering little light, whether or not he tended it, whether or not he even tried to extinguish it, and it would never die.

But he needed more heat now. With spendthrift prodigality, with some remaining dregs of drunken splendor still, he built the fire up, piling on handful after handful, the supply of whole future weeks of heat, till the flame crackled up bright and yellow, till the mirror walls sparkled a thousand times and the great crocodile-carved couch gleamed with golden lights. Now more and more points of light were reflected, where other objects seemed to spring forth out of leaden darkness and take life about the room. Golden censers and golden harps, the heaps of glittering dust, the great golden basin where it rested on its carved stone pedestal, filled with a sparkle to its heaped-up brim like bushels and bushels of broken glass or the gleam of a million serpent eyes.

CHAPTER III

DUST OF THE YEARS

THE place in which he was was a part of the great temple which had survived almost intact through the earthquake and upheaval and sinking of the milleniums. And as it stood, it had been buried. It was a room of about eighteen by thirty feet, its ceiling of a height of twenty feet or more, walled on three sides, including the rear wall through whose staircase doorway Esmerado had crept in. On the fourth side, in front, it had no wall, but a wide architrave which opened out upon a vast irregular cavern of earth, where loomed the shadows, standing in even ranks, of stone pillars carved in animalistic shapes, like the carved caryatids of the Greeks. And beyond, even vaster shapes, half buried in the earth. . . .

The three walls, sparkling now, were covered halfway to the ceiling with sheets of hammered glass-smooth gold, laid on in yard-wide vertical strips so smoothly fitted together that they must have seemed originally to form one solid golden mirror-surface, though the joints had sprung now and their edges had become bent, and some of the strips, loosened from their top anchorings, had doubled downward of their own weight, in heavy half-inch thick leaves like peeling wallpaper in a moldy room. And like old wallpaper, too, the gold was dark and stained.

Above the mirrors, to the ceiling, the flinty red-brown stone walls were carved with basreliefs—plumed serpents, dancing gargoyle figures, suns and moons and constellations, cabalistic characters and numerals, symbols that had no meaning which could be read now, and no guess made of what great and terrible history they might tell.

The lofty ceiling itself was formed of long narrow slabs of some grayish fungus-colored stone. It had probably once been picture-painted, by the outline of vague shadows still to be seen on it, though the pigments had blackened and curled away, and the design could not be traced. Here and there, where one or two of the slabs had broken and fallen, the tangled roots of the jungle which flourished above extruded downward, matted with the

black loam in which they grew, like a rupture of the entrails of the earth.

The chamber floor had once been surfaced with sculptured tiles, painted and baked with symbolic designs resembling those carved on the upper walls. They, however, had suffered more damage—the most of them broken and dislodged, lying scattered in a rubble of triangular shards on the stone; while toward the front of the room, near the threshold of the open architrave, a whole section of the stone floor itself, about five by ten feet, had fallen away completely, leaving a yawning pit that opened down to dark and bottomless depths below, from which came that charnel gas which kept alive the little flame.

This gold-mirrored, lofty, shallow room—there was a voice which had told Esmerado—had been the sacrificial maiden's bower, the boudoir of the bride of death, at the summit of the great pyramid—the sanctuary or temple vestibule, at the back of the columned peristyle. Here she had been bathed in perfumed waters, decked and garlanded, banqueted and wined and drugged, lying on beds of flowers and listening to the music of the golden harps while the tall censers gave forth their perfumed smoke, awaiting in the terror of her young soul and unlived years for the hour to come, for the summoning of the gods. Here she had waited for the intrusion of the masked and stone-faced under-priests to bind and carry her out through the architrave of the doorway, out between the tall caryatid columns of the peristyle set on their stylobates, out beneath the great blue sky of heaven and the sunlight on the platform of the pyramid, where the huge stone sun-dial stood that held the record of the pitiless centuries, with its golden marker flashing now upon this hour and moment, and where the great high priest in gargoyle mask awaited beside the blood-stained altar. While the great stone gods, seated side by side in a towering row, with their stone hands upon their stone laps and the sunlight in their jeweled eyes, sat motionless looking down.

Ah! The thunder of the drums, and the great exultant howling of the multitude, screaming *Blood!*—screaming *Victory!*—screaming *Hail!* It would have been something to have lived in those days, thought Esmerado. To have been the great high priest.

Dust. All dust. Here in the subterranean vestibule of golden mirrors there still stood the great crocodile-carved couch frame, with its curved golden slats, but the silken mattresses and pillows, the heaps of flowers with which it had been piled high, were dust. The tall golden censers still stood, but their perfumed fire was dust. The strange bird-footed gold pediments were still there, and the golden strings of the harps and zithers, but their curved resonant bows had gone with the dust, and their music and their songs. There was the great golden oval basin in which those smooth brown young limbs had been laved, but where were the pale rippling waters now, and where were They?

When he had first weeviled into this long-buried golden place Esmerado had found, scattered here and there about the floor in the rubble and the dust, great round-cut blazing jewels, pale watery emeralds and yellow diamonds and strange glittering purple stones which he did not know, some as large as hen eggs and as thickly strewn as pebbles—enough of them to fill the golden bath up to the brim and heaping over, when he had started gathering them—all pierced for a loop of golden wire, as if they had once been attached to garments like sequins or common buttons. He had found heavy gold hinges and square-bent gold bands, buried in heaps of dust which had once been, perhaps, great wooden chests of fabrics. Golden hand mirrors and golden vials, and golden hairpins lying in the dust. But that was all. Dust, all dust the rest of it, the cushions and the fine-spun fabrics, the scents and ointments in the golden vials, the perfumed hair which those gold pins had adorned. Dust, all dust the smooth young maidens, warm and living, golden-brown, waiting in terror for their dreadful hour. Dust, too, the great high priest. All dust.

THERE was only Esmerado now, with the little gear of his own poor, iron, ungolden civilization which he had brought in to shelter in this great splendid ancient fane. And those things, too, turning fast to decay and dust. His pair of moldy leather suitcases beneath the great golden couch. His green-molded verdigris-encrusted cartridges in the rusty gun holster thrown down upon them, with three verdigris-encrusted cartridges in the rusty gun chamber. The moldy leather scabbard of his rusted and broken sword. There was only Esmerado, gaunt and pale, with his last decaying things, kneeling and shivering beside his little fire. But he would not be dust.

He removed the canteen dangling from his neck, and unstoppered it with bony fingers. He took a swallow, measured but not too short, of the strong reeking rotted drink, and stopped it up again. It was enough, with what was already in his emaciated body.

"Cockroaches!" he said aloud, and laughed. "Here's to you all!" he croaked, not knowing at whom he was laughing particularly, nor why. But with a feeling of shadows around him for the moment, after the drink, translucent and vague as glass.

"Hi, Greer!" he said. "Hi, Grepperson, old comrade!"

But they had not come back yet, of course. He should not see them here. His first drink, this drink today, since they had gone away,

and that had really been quite a while. A red-letter day. He had better make a note of it in his diary. It would be a long time before the maguey would bloom again.

A note in his diary, yes. He kept his diary every day. Well, almost every day. He always noted all the important happenings in it, anyway. He leaned over and hauled one of his decayed pigskin suitcases out from underneath the golden couch.

He opened the lid, almost falling to pieces in his hands. It wasn't, however, the case containing his diary and other papers, but the one which held his clothes. For a moment, swaying as he knelt, he looked down at its visible contents — his toilet articles, a dress shirt, his folded dress uniform of sage-green tunic with red velvet cuffs and collar, and midnight-blue breeches striped with white.

The razor of his shaving kit was crusted with rust; the brush handle had been eaten bare of bristles; the beveled mirror was a piece of blank glass from which the foil had peeled away. A thick green web of mold and fungus covered the fabric of the clothes, and the fringed epaulets of his tunic, its once bright gilded buttons, were all corroded to a greasy green. Even the cuffs and collar had been eaten away before he had brought it in here. It had never been worn and he could never wear it now. Even in good condition, of course, it wouldn't fit him any more. He was thinner —much.

He pushed the case back in and hauled out the other one. He had not used up its entire contents for fuel in that terrible night when he had thought the fire would surely die. There was still a mass of paper money in it of assorted kinds, all wadded together—pesos, milreis, balboas, sols and bolivars, yellow U. S. gold certificates, colons, sucres, quetzals, and cordobas, as well as banknotes of his own Paradonia, in 1,000, 10,000, and 100,000 par denominations.

The loot and ransom of towns, the payments of endless occupation assessments for his armies, the wealth of whole countries and provinces. A tremendous sum, in any money. Greer, who had been his minister of finance as well as justice and artillery chief, had had a shrewd and ruthless genius for locating the last dollar. Though all of it would not buy the huge two-ton gold crocodile couch he slept on now, nor even one peeling sheet upon the mirrored wall. All the wealth of the whole world did not equal what was buried here.

Old yellow letters, also, were in the bag, and copies of military proclamations, orders of battle, coded reports of agents and spies, and his scrapbooks of newspaper clippings. He opened one of them, upon a two-column halftone spread of his picture which was only a blur now upon the rotting page, but the headlines were still legible.

Conqueror Overruns Ciraco!

Esmerado Declares War on Polia! Crosses Border in Lightning Thrust!

Army of Esmerado in Drive for River! Paradisio Declared an Open City! All Feranchia Submits!

Pages and pages of headlined clippings. Two whole scrapbooks full. Conquest after conquest, wherever he had led his victorious army. He was Esmerado, the great and terrible. From the river shore in the west to the gates of Salino in the east, twenty provinces beneath his sway. There had never been another like him in the world.

The leaves of his leather-bound diary, when he picked it up, were warped and stuck together. He bent it back and forth, springing it open at about the middle.

IT WAS a five-year diary, with five spaces on each page, for entries the same date of succeeding years. He had begun it, continuing a preceding diary, the first of January just after he had been turned back from Mascolia, but before he had gone sweeping on to the gates of Salino and all the glorious conquests of that year.

The pages were dated August 4 and 5 to which, as it happened, the warped book had opened. Any other dates would have been as full of great and tremendous history. He looked at the entries with interest, for he had had so many victories that he had forgotten many of them.

August 4, the first year, the entry was:

Attack continues on Salino. Probably fall within week. Burned two villages today. Greer hanged shopkeeper in one, shot mayor of second. $2800 collected. It keeps piling up. Nothing can stop us.

The next day, on the opposite page:

Grepperson bombed Salino with airplane, I along as observer. Inhabitants fled like ducks as we came roaring over. Very inspiring to watch. Grocery store, feed and grain store, and three houses badly damaged by bomb explosion and fire started. Seven inhabitants killed. Town can't stand such punishment much longer, together with devastating pounding of my six field pieces.

August 4, a year later, the entry was somewhat briefer:

Strategic retreat from Salino, losing 283 men cut off and captured. My best troops.

August 5, on the opposite page:

Col. Grepperson, air chief, complains of enemy's tactics. They have 2 airplanes themselves now, and faster. Bombed us.

The third year, the entry for August 4 was:

Taking plane tomorrow with Greer and Grepperson to fly to Orovallo with treasury,

where sanctuary has been arranged. Will organize and equip powerful new armies, 2500 or 5000 men, and renew war.

The entry for the day following, opposite:

Crashed 4 P.M. somewhere in jungle. Leg broken. No other injuries.

The entry for August 4, the fourth year, brought back to him a red-letter day which he still remembered:

Found dead pig in glade this A.M., killed by jaguar during night and not half eaten. Beat ants and Them to it, for once. Stuffed, and brought remainder home.

The entry for the next day was still pleasurable:

Finished pig.

There were no entries for the dates for the fifth year, below. It couldn't be the fifth year yet.

He hadn't kept it up every day, of course. He had skipped a few days here and there which were more or less alike. That was only natural. And there had been those times when he had been ill, with fever or with venom.

But today was a day that he must enter. The first maguey that he had happened on at all, and he had got himself a drink from it that deserved to be recorded. His first drink since Greer and Grepperson had gone away. The last he might have until they returned. Or till the maguey bloomed again.

Drink and women, power and glory, battle and conquest, blood and gold and life and loot. He should not let it fade from him that they existed, oppressed and eaten by meager anxieties about the thinness of his bones, about the sliding things, about the rotten greenness, about Them. No! He was Esmerado, the terrible and strong. He was Esmerado, straight through hell.

He ought to have kept up the diary, not skipping a single day, for any excuse. He would, from this date forth. It would be of priceless value for historians of the future, after Greer and Grepperson had come back, after they had loaded up all the gold, after he had got together a great new army, with an air force of a dozen planes, and a hundred machine guns, and maybe even a tank. After he had conquered every province, and had become the greatest man in history.

He must enter it under the date now, that on this unforgettable red-letter day he had got roaring singing swaying drunk and had had great dreams, and crystal shapes had been all around him, and that Esmerado was himself again.

But he had forgotten the exact day of the month, and he had forgotten the month, too, whether it was June or October, or the green steaming rotten time of winter or the green steaming rotten time of spring. He was not even sure, he realized, just what was the year. It might be 1921—but it might even be 1922.

He looked through the warped book, breaking open other stuck pages where they could be separated, trying to find a reminder to refresh his memory. The entries for those first three years were all complete. Complete for the first two, anyway, during his great conquests, and for the third year up to and through their crash here. And after that the entries were still mostly all complete—Greer and Grepperson leaving, his first glimpse of Them, the day toward the end of October when he had solved the problem of the great obstructing stone and had first entered into this jeweled golden place.

Only a few days missing in that year, indicating when he had first been ill with fever, and again that first strike of dreadful poison; and later on when he had been toiling hard at uncovering the great buried gods, and no time to make his daily entries.

There were more and longer gaps in the fourth year, sometimes a week, and sometimes even a month or more. In the fifth year there were only a few entries—one in January, one in April, one in June. But two in December. So that year must be past.

OF course, he remembered. He dropped the warped diary back in the case and stood up on his long wobbling legs, moving toward the mirrored walls. Since the end of the year when he had crashed here, when the daily entries had been becoming a little tedious and repetitious, he had been keeping track of the days more efficiently and economically by marking them off upon the wall.

One vertical stroke for each day from Monday through Saturday, and then a stroke across to make a week. And four weeks down made about a month. And fifty-two down, and one day over, made a year. Which made a column, when he had completed it, from about the level of his eyes down to his knees. And after one was finished, he put the date of a new year and started off on it. It didn't give him the exact calendar date, of course, just at a glance. But by adding up, the precise day could always be figured out.

Yes, here was the place on the golden wall where he always marked off each day. Each one, that was, except now and then when he happened to forget. He looked at the groups of cross-hatched weeks which made the columned years. He looked at the columns slantwise, from the edges of his blurred reddened eyes, for he never looked at any of the mirrored walls direct . . .

The years 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922 . . . 1928 . . . 1931. . . . Eleven, twelve columns. Twelve years, about two-thirds of another. Almost thirteen years. But he was not so sure that he had marked down all the days.

He would put this one down, at least. He picked up a fragment of broken tile from the rubble at his feet, and made a line two inches long in the soft gold that was a thousand fine.

Today he had had a drink. He would have another drink with those glass shapes in another hundred years.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAPIPIRE

IT WAS about time that he went forth to see the great stone gods again. He had not looked at them for some little time, nor dug around them to uncover them any further.

How hard and sweatingly he had used to work, for long unremitting hours each day, cutting and hacking at the earth and tangled roots, in a driving frenzy of excitement and treasure lust! And impelled by a strange insatiable curiosity, also.

He had used his sword for both axe and pick. And when the haft had broken off he had wrapped rags for a hand grip about the blade. He had used the bleached skull of a giant saurian which he had found down at the swamp edge for a scoop, and had shoveled away the dislodged earth into the dark yawning pit in the floor of the sanctuary here, down to the unknown depths below. He had sweated, never resting, like a Sisyphus incessantly pushing stones.

He had excavated hundreds of tons of earth, perhaps thousands, through the months and through the years. He had done much of it with his naked hands. He had dug out all the great dark irregular cavern which lay now beyond the architrave doorway, where there had been only compact earth before, exposing the columned caryatids of the peristyle, uncovering the great broken calendar stone, laying bare the dark stained altar with its bow-shaped surface, four feet high and no more than three in length—the length of a human body from the neck to the knee—on which the sacrificial maidens had been laid.

He had found and uncovered the outlines of the platform, overlooking the vast powerful city, where the great war drums had beat. He had stood where the high priest had stood. And, working feverishly and relentlessly, in those first months and years, he had dug and hacked away the earth and twisted roots from around the huge sculptured faces and from more than half the lengths of the great stone gods themselves.

Four of them, anyway, he had uncovered, one by one. Though there might be others, and greater ones, that he didn't know about, still hidden in the earth.

He had worked at that laborious task of excavation every day. He forgot now why he had quit. He couldn't remember now how long it had been since he had last been out to see them, either. It might have been ten years. . . .

He moved out, with his stilted bony stride, close against one side of the architrave doorway, skirting with care the pit in the floor. He went out into the darkness of the cavern, which had been the platform of the great temple, putting his hands upon the carved caryatids as he passed.

His feet were fumbling for the moment and he felt before him with extended arms. The unaccustomed brightness of the lavish fire which he had built up had made him temporarily mole-blind. There were roots, like a tangled forest upside down, growing all around him now—they had grown down again, and, thicker, since he had last hacked them away.

Great monolithic shapes in the darkness loomed around him. He was among them now, Big Bobo, Big Gogo, Bug Eyes, and Screw Neck, the great prostrate stone gods.

They were from twelve to forty feet in length, as they lay, and of proportionate circumference—the four great stone gods which Esmerado had uncovered long ago. With great blazing emerald eyes like saucers, with great necklaces of emeralds about their throats, of saffron diamonds, and purple stones the size of ostrich eggs such as the earth does not know any more.

They had been seated on their stone thrones in a row. And they had toppled backward in a row. They lay supine, still seated, like tilted letter N's, with their knees above them, their hands folded on their laps, their faces turned to the earth which had buried them.

The sculptor who had chiseled them had been something of a genius in lithic characterization, and with a comical slant. A humanist and a humorist of that great dark civilization. He had not been content to chisel simply great towering superhuman and inhuman figures, conventional Molochs or Jingos or Sivas, of horrendous but meaningless expressions. Instead, he had shaped the four images with distinctive forms and features—each individualized from the others, and with its own personality, like men.

There was one, the smallest of them, the twelve-foot one, which had a malign and scrawny face, with hollow cheeks and deep lines about the mouth; and the mouth snarling, twisted to one side, as if furious words were pouring out of it, in rage at its own inferior dimensions. There was another about twice as high, and enormously fat, with a great bulging sack of belly and dumpling cheeks, yet all the more a terrifying figure because of those symbols of false jollity, with its wide cruel mouth, and a remorseless and unpitying look in its long sloping forehead above its glaring eyes. There was a third one about

thirty-five feet high, which had a spindling neck, at the top of which was set a round knobbed head, chinless and feeble-mouthed, with a soft inquiring look about its round curved jeweled eyes—a look of slippery softness in the stone like a white corrupting worm.

WHAT their great names had been Esmerado did not know, nor what great and terrible gods of war and slaughter, of death and destruction they had represented. He just called them by the names he had made up for them—Big Bobo for the biggest, Big Gogo for the fattest, Bug Eyes for the one with the worm look, and Screw Neck for the smallest.

Huge broken wheels and vast metal wings, bent and twisted, reared above him. It was some kind of an incredible giant plane lying shattered here in the jungle.

The fourth of the great stone gods, all of forty feet in height, had a long thick nose, a fringe of hair falling down on its forehead, and a mouth opened in a great eternal soundless scream. And in that insane yelling face, the greatest of all the gods, the sculptor had managed to put the look of all madness and all insanities.

Here they lay, the great stone gods, in their thrones which had been overset, hearing the great drums thundering no more, hearing no more the great voice of the frenzied multitude screaming *Blood!* and *Victory!* and *Hail!* Here

in the darkness, in the earth that buried them. And many a time Esmerado, gaunt and bony, had crawled across their faces like a fly.

Here, as they had lain for thousands of years. In their stone brains, behind their jeweled eyes did they still await the thundering of the drums, and all of that once more?

Ah, but the city itself had gone! The great and rich and powerful city, the capital of a mighty empire, perhaps the greatest the world had ever known. Gone with the sword, gone with the flame, gone with the madness of its own blood lust and hunger for destruction. Gone its vast wealth, and gone its fierce relentless people. Gone with the ant and the creeping snake. Gone to the jungle. And men would know its name no more. Only the Little People now, carrion-eaters, subhuman, houseless, voiceless, foul—still beating at times, with a dolorous far off remembrance in Their little brains, Their little monkey drums.

Gone! They who had drunk blood and lived in blood, who had been the destroyers of wealth and nations, who had worshiped the great stone gods. And the world would know their name no more.

Those were the four great stone gods which Esmerado had uncovered, with crocodile-skull scoop and clawing hands. There might be even greater ones, and many of them, still hidden. He did not know. That there was one vastly smaller one, though, he did know. He had suddenly remembered the fifth, small god.

It lay where he had uncovered it one day, among those greater gods. It lay at his feet now. A little stone god not above twelve inches high, which had sat among the greater gods, or at their feet. A miniature. A ridiculous little copy. He had found it unexpectedly, after many years.

He remembered, now, the day of his discovery. He had paused in his sweating digging to sift over a scoopful of earth for loose jewels, and had seen among the dirt grains a tiny object no bigger than an ant. At first glance he had thought that that was what it was—the scarab of an ant. Picking it up and holding it closer to his eyes, between thumb and forefinger, he had seen that it was the figure of a tiny man in stone, with a tiny hard-jawed look which reminded him of Grepperson. Sifting the dirt out further, with some amusement, he had found another tiny figure which he had held up before his eyes, and seen the likeness of Greer.

He had begun to dig again, and a few minutes later had come upon that small twelve-inch stone god then, seated in mimicry of the great ones, on its small throne which had been overset. Squatting on his hams, he had pressed down his face above it, glaring with reddened eyes.

The figure was of a big, fat-bellied man, with a bulbous nose, a spreading cavalryman's mustache and heavy-lidded eyes. The figure of what he had been himself. Esmerado.

He had left it lying there and had not come back again.

It was still here. It would always be here, among the greater gods. No worse, nor better, lying here, than if he threw it down into those deep charnel pits beneath the floor of the sanctuary, or out into the jungle.

The mole-blindness which the fire had given him temporarily had cleared from his eyes now. Beyond the huge bulks of the great supine gods, down at the far end of the cavern, he saw that a landslide had occurred, which had filled in, with one avalanche of earth, a space that it had taken him laborious months to dig.

It must have happened quite recently. The smell of earth was fresh. It was almost as if a section of the forest floor had caved in from above, with noise of crashing trees and great commotion, while he had been in drunken sleep.

At last he knew it had indeed, for he saw a green light glimmering there, from the jungle up above. He heard the screeching of the birds and monkeys, heard the little peaspod drums. The jungle floor had fallen in, still fresh, still sliding, with torn bushes and ripped vines amidst the cascading dirt and leaves of splintered trees.

And something in the darkness, close about him, creeping.

"Who's there?" Esmerado croaked. "Who's there? Don't you come in, you sneaking little lice!"

He took a step, gaunt and stalking, toward the green light of the break.

"Cockroaches!" he croaked. "Titmice!"

But it wasn't one of them, on little furtive feet. It was something crawling. He felt it crawling beneath his naked foot. In the darkness he had stepped on it.

All his limbs were bathed with sweat. There was no strength in him, his blood was water. With a gasping oath he sprawled and leaped over it, and with long stumbling legs tried to run. Toward the green jungle light ahead. Toward anything. But the tangled underground roots impeded him. Oh, in the darkness it was there! It was there with him!

He had bruised it with his step, and so enraged it. He felt the inaudible swiftness of it. He could not get away from it. He could not fend it off with his blind beating hands as he stumbled and tried to run.

HE FELT the stroke of it against his thigh, sending him sprawling with the force of a bullet. He fell on hands and knees, with a sobbing cry, among the great dark roots, not far from the great stone gods. Its fangs were in his flesh, and deep. Oh, the great

foul mapipire! A terrible one, ten feet long, with broad bulges of venom sacs in its huge blunt head.

Sobbing helplessly, he looked down at its terrible golden eyes, and at its great fangs that were hooked into him.

"Oh, you vile swine!" he sobbed. "You dog, you dirty demon!"

He got his fist around its rough scaled neck, as hard and rough as the husk of a pineapple. He tore it loose. He staggered to his feet while it writhed and threshed in his grip. He staggered to the half-buried head of one of the great stone gods, planted the serpent's head against the stone. With his free fist he beat and beat, while its golden eyes glared at him. He beat it into pulp, and into jelly. But from the mass its golden eyes still glared at him malevolently.

He heaved the great vile hideous snake from him. It was dead, though its brood would never die. Swaying, he looked down at his purple thigh. The great hooked fangs had broken off, were caught in his flesh like giant thorns.

He tore them out. His whole blood was anti-venine—it had become a colorless venom in itself, like the blood of a horse which is repeatedly poisoned and drained for serum —from all the horrible doses he had taken from such fangs through all the dreadful years. But he could still know all the pain. All the agonizing pain. And more.

Among the stone gods forever.

There was that green light from the jungle above, where the floor had caved in. He staggered toward it, clawed up over soft, still sliding earth toward the shadowy green day. Buried amidst the avalanche of soil around him he felt things heaving, stirring, struggling to get clear. He climbed up in haste past them, Esmerado.

He collapsed in the green daylight outside, crawling toward a great tree trunk a few yards off which leaned steeply at an angle, split and tilted, half uprooted, amidst the sunken earth. He leaned his back against it, sweating. With blind hands he tore the rotted strap of the canteen from around his neck, and fumbled to uncork it. A drink might help with the agonizing pain. Blessed pulque, heaven-given pulque.

But he must not use all of it. Not all of it. He would want it again, and many times, before the maguey bloomed once more. . . .

There was some large shadow looming over him, he became aware presently, where he sat propped against the splintered tree trunk. Something close beside him which was not a part of the everlasting jungle. He cast his red-rimmed eyes around, rolling them backward in his head. It was the hulk of a great hurricane-smashed cruiser, lying piled up and shattered here, a thousand miles from the ocean.

No, not a ship. There were huge broken wheels, ten feet high, with huge burst tires upon them. There were vast metal wings, snapped back and folded upward vertically, like the touching wing tips of an eagle, from a giant hulk of fuselage, bent and twisted. There was the smell of spilled glycerine and gasoline.

Some kind of an incredible giant plane. A huge monoplane, with eight giant engines— a thing a hundred times as big, a hundred times as powerful, as his and Greer's and Grepperson's own big fast new two-motored biplane bomber, with its speed of almost ninety miles an hour and its ceiling of fifteen thousand feet, its bomb-carrying capacity of five hundred pounds, whose rusted engine and smashed undercarriage lay not far off in the jungle.

What terrific and irresistible victories could be won with a thing like that! If he had had a thing like that, they would never have stopped him at Salino in the east. He would have blasted to its knees little Angia in the west across the river. He would have conquered the whole country, not just twenty provinces. He would have conquered the whole continent, the whole world.

With that great broken thing, if he had had it.

But it wasn't real, of course.

There were four shapes of men climbing up out of the cascaded earth of the caved forest floor. But they weren't real, either. There was nothing like them in the world, thought Esmerado.

Nothing, outside of hell.

CHAPTER V

WHEN THE MAGUEY BLOOMS AGAIN

IT HAD been a rather nasty crash, and quite unexpected by any of them. In the pressure-proof cabin of their great plane, en route to sanctuary in Orovallo, they had heard no alteration of the powerful motors' beat for twenty hours.

High in the stratosphere. Miles above the gray carpet of the storm clouds. Above the deep blue outer ocean. Above the emerald and sapphire off-shore isles, and the dark brown waters of the great spewing river mouths pouring a hundred miles out into the sea. Inland, above the green jungle carpet of this young continent, which none of them had ever seen before.

Behind them they had left half the world soaked in blood. They had left thirty million dead. They had left five hundred millions homeless, naked, meager of knowledge, starved and underboned, whose lives and whose children's lives and children's children's lives through uncounted generations would be littler and meagerer and forever poorer because of what they had been. They had left burned up and blasted, spent in war, the product of the toil of generations. The husks of cities, and sterile countrysides where nothing that could nourish man would ever grow again, but only bitter apples and burdock weed. They had left their own once-great, rich, powerful, blood-eager empire given over itself now to destruction, to blotting out, and men would know its name no more.

No more for them the great booming drums, the voices of the screaming multitude, roaring *Victory! Hail!* The screaming blood-eager multitude was slaughtered, the drums had been burst in.

But for themselves, they had long ago arranged to get out of it, when they had seen how things were turning. Their great plane had been especially built for this flight and held in readiness, when it should become necessary. They had sanctuary awaiting them in Orovallo.

And they had a considerable amount of wealth themselves, saved from the wreckage. Hundreds of millions. They were carrying much of it with them. The rest of it lay at their command in a dozen countries. With gold, there was still power. Some day, when the tired and sickened world had begun a little to forget them, they would come back, to do it all again, at even bloodier and greater cost.

They talked it over among themselves, about

"Stand up and lead us out of here!"
said the man with the forelock.
But the skeleton only laughed.

how they would come back, with stony eyes, with hands folded in their laps, as they sat in their big comfortable chairs, droning through the stratosphere, high and steady as the stars, above the green carpet of this new continent, which in their lives they had never seen before.

This continent so new to them, and yet so very old.

"We must continue to stick together, through everything," proclaimed the military genius, the leader of men. "Together, sooner or later, we will come back."

He opened his mouth to repeat it with a shout, for he liked the sound of the phrase. And for the moment, before his glaring eyes, there were hundreds of thousands of the roaring multitude massed in the great city square below him, waiting to hear him speak, when the great drums had ceased to beat.

But the other three understood him, without his repeating it.

"That is the first essential, certainly," agreed the chief of police, with a soft wormlike mouth, nodding his knob head upon his little neck.

"Together, always," echoed the fat man, the chief of air.

The little man of them twisted his mouth ironically, saying nothing. He, too, agreed on the necessity of their sticking together, definitely, until they could come back. But the next time, after they had come back, he was going to be the leader himself. He had more brains than any of them. If he had been directing it, things wouldn't have come to such a bad end.

"Do you have a feeling—" he began, and paused.

"Yes?"

"Well, I don't know how to describe it. But a feeling that any of you have been here before?"

"I—" said the fat man.

"No, I'm sure I haven't," said the chief of police, a little uncertainly.

"I have never been outside of the country before!" said the military leader in a loud voice. "You know it very well. Why do you suggest it?"

His eyes glared at the little man.

"I don't know," said the little man uncertainly. "Of course, I have never been here before myself."

Then, at that moment, from the communicator in the gold-leaf paneled cabin, there had spoken a metallic and impersonal voice. The voice of the chief pilot, probably. Or perhaps of the assistant pilot.

"Generators have ceased functioning! Engines dead, without spark! Stand by for emergency landing!"

The engines, yes, had ceased. Plenty of fuel still. But they had run out of electricity.

The huge powerful ship seemed to have struck a vacuum of energy. A dead spot above the earth.

The powerful plane was of ultra-safe design, and prepared for all emergencies. It could have been converted to a submarine, if forced down over sea. It had all provisions and tools for forced descent in arctic waste or jungle. It had huge helicopter vanes which would let it down slowly, over any terrain. Its cabin, of reinforced steel, was shock-absorbed with glycerine-filled pistons. All things had been prepared against.

Released, the vanes above the wings began to spin at once in the descending wind-pressure. The big ship, with its pilots feathering the dead controls and watching the instruments, with its engine men swarming over the nacelles to locate the trouble, went down slowly, in that dead vacuum of energy, toward the smooth vast green carpet of the world below, so young and yet so old. While the four men in the cabin sat stiffly in their chairs, with hands clenched on their laps, with stony eyes, waiting tensely.

Sudden smashing tree limbs around the cabin windows, blotting out the daylight! A green splintering world. The crash of ripping wings, where the engine men to the last had been frantically laboring. Strong as it was, the cabin had been slammed and knocked about, its sides bent in, as it dropped plunging. And then the great crash as it struck the jungle floor, and amidst the snapping thunder of the trees the whole earth seemed to cave away below.

The four men in the cabin had been flung out, into caving, avalanchal earth. Amidst all the world-splitting thunder of sounds they heard, above them, the scream of one of the crewmen, and then no more.

THEY worked their way out of the dirt, and shook themselves.

"God in hell!" said the fat man, with a hard laugh.

"What is this?" shouted the military genius, with glaring eyes, shaking the dirt out of his forelock. "What kind of an insane plane is this?"

The little man with the lean twisted face said nothing. He jammed his hands into his pants pockets, with his neck screwed aside. For the moment he shivered like a dog.

The man with the small head on the thin neck, with the bug eyes and the small wormy mouth, the chief of police, pulled his submachine gun out of the dirt, and looked over the barrel and mechanism with businesslike efficiency.

"I would suggest you see that your guns are all right, gentlemen," he said. "This thing is somewhat unfortunate. We are not entirely out of the woods yet, I am afraid. A rather lonely and inaccessible spot. Our first neces-

sity is to locate natives who may be conscripted to guide us."

There was a hollow darkness in the earth beyond where they stood, knee-deep in the avalanchal soil. However, the green jungle was only a little above them. Shaking themselves and fishing the dirt out of their ears and collars with their forefingers, with their guns in their hands, they climbed up out of it.

"There! You!" said the man with the bug eyes.

The skeleton bones sat underneath a tree. He was taking a drink from a flask in his hands. He looked at them with red and hollow eyes.

"Stand up!" said the man with the bug eyes warningly. "Are you a native? We want you to lead us out of here!"

The skeleton laughed.

"Whom do you think you're laughing at?" screamed the man with the forelock and the glaring eyes. "We won't trifle with your stupidity, you white-boned dog! You heard the command! Stand up, and lead us out of here!"

The skeleton laughed.

"God in hell, he's never even heard of us," said the fat man. "The only man in the world who's never heard of us. He doesn't know who we are."

The little man with the screw neck said nothing. He shivered like a dog.

"Stand up, and lead us out," said the man with the bug eyes persuasively, smoothing his thumb over the gun in his hands. "This is a machine gun. Kills. Kills dead. But if you are obedient, we may spare your life. We want to get out of here."

The skeleton croaked a laugh.

"You try and try," he said, "but you are always in the same place. You walk and walk, and run and run, and pant and pant, through swamp and bush and vine and thorn, until your lungs are burned out of you and your heart bursts, and you fall down on the ground. And you are still in the same place.

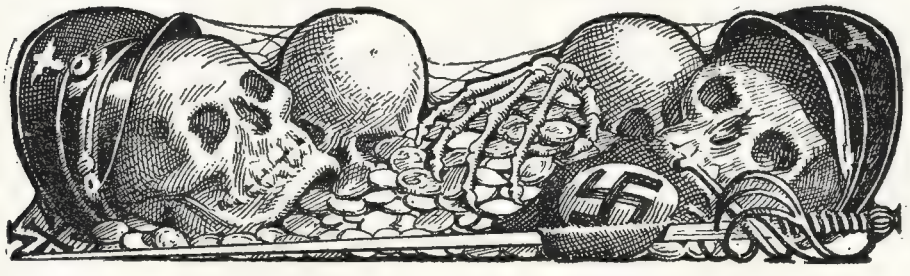
"And your friends have vanished before your eyes," he said. "They have turned to smoke and glass. And you have no food but once a week or so a rotted frog to eat. And the great snakes bite you, and you feel all the pain of it. And the ants eat your flesh off your bones, and you feel all the pain of it. And the great blocks fall down on you and crush you to jelly, and you feel all the pain of it. And you know that someday, soon or late, you will fall down into the deep pit beneath the floor which has no bottom and no end, among the charnel bones where the snakes breed, and in the blackness down there still you will feel all the terror and the pain of it. But you cannot die.

"This is hell," he said. "We made it, and we are in it. Each man of us alone in it, and we cannot die."

"Kill the crazy fiend!" screamed the man with the glaring eyes. "He makes me sick!"

With a soft oath on his worm lips, the man with the bug eyes ripped at the trigger of his machine gun. But his hand must have been unsteady, or his eye off. For the skeleton sat beneath the tree with his flask in his hand, and laughed.

"I'd give you a drink," he said. "Big Bobo, Big Gogo, Bug Eyes and Screw Neck. But I can't see you any more. Only crystal fading. And you can't see each other any more, can you? But we will all gather at the maguey and have a drink together when it blooms again. It is the one thing given us. In another hundred years."



HANDLE with CARE

A "Crazy" McIntosh Story

By
KEITH
EDGAR

ILLUSTRATED
BY
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FARREN

I swallow my heart and look back to see him hanging tight to that switchpost.

NOW you wouldn't believe it, but actually I am a poetic sort of cuss. So when Crazy McIntosh finally winds a rope around his own neck, I think of the time Shakespeare said, "Thus the whirligig of Time brings in His revenges."

It seems to fit this case particularly well since Crazy, who is undoubtedly the meanest, orneriest, worst-tempered, most sarcastic old hogger east of St. Louis, brought it all on himself.

What happened was quite simple. Dirty Dolan, his stupid fireman, came down with the flu, and Crazy McIntosh had to take a substitute fireman on an eastbound. Well, Crazy, he goes booming down the division in his usual style, breaking rules right and left—and scaring the living daylight out of this fireman.

The tallowpot reports the hogger.

That's all there was to it. Crazy has been getting away with plenty for nearly thirty years and now he is laid off pending a hearing, when he will undoubtedly be fired once and for all.

At last, after all my suffering, I get a break. In the first place, I won't have to run any more with the long, lean, horse-faced old stringbean. And in the second place, he can no longer object to me marrying Peggy, his dark-eyed daughter, on the grounds that I ain't a good enough railroad man—because he won't be one himself any longer.

So this afternoon I am happy as I trudge with my basket down to the yard office and sign out on an eastbound "extra." It won't be long now until me and Peggy can get married. Just as soon as her old man gets the boot and goes back to the farm, yours truly is getting a wedding license. Vengeance is indeed sweet. Justice has triumphed. I leave the yard office, mosey along to the west end of the yards and find our caboose. Going into the crummy, I say howdy to our conductor, Jelly-belly Bates, who is sitting at his desk in a specially reinforced chair going over the manifests.

Murdoch, our rear-end brakeman, wanders in, grins at me and says, "Hey, Bub! Guess who is our hogger this trip?"

"I dunno," I tell him. "I didn't bother finding out. Who?"

Murdoch chuckles meanly. "None other than your pal, Crazy McIntosh."

"What!" I yelp. "It can't be! He is suspended!"

Jelly-belly belches comfortably and shakes his fat jowls. "Yeah, but Foxy Jones is sick and old Dusty Hoolihan fell off an engine and sprained his ankle and there just ain't no other hogger available till somebody pulls in from a run. So they has to call out Crazy on this trip."

"Cheer up, Bub," comforts Murdoch, who hates Crazy McIntosh. "It'll be the last time, specially if he breaks any more rules on this trip, which is quite likely. Then you can report him and put the finish on the old winging's ticket."

"Listen," I tell him, "I don't like Crazy nohow, but I ain't no stool-pigeon. I ain't reporting nobody."

Murdoch shrugs and starts to clean the tail lamps. I stow my basket, get my lanterns in case it is dark when we get to Fort Erie, shove a few track torpedoes in my pocket, get a few fusees from the locker and start up toward the depot, crunching over the cinders in deep thought.

ARE YOU SAVING PAPER?

OUR engine on this trip is old 2452, a powerful hog with a nice turn of speed. She is waiting at the switch by the depot for our train which is just whistling west of town.

And there is Crazy McIntosh, his lank figure draped in clean overalls, denim cap on backwards and goggles shoved up on his forehead, gaunt cheek bulging with McAndrews Plug "a strong chew for strong men," poking among the hog's driver bearings with a long-spouted oilcan.

Crazy straightens up and sees me.

I say politely, "Good afternoon, Mr. McIntosh."

He shifts his quid, expectorates, and a sad grin appears on his horse face. He drawls, "Good afternoon, me boy," and bends over his drivers again.

I am taken aback. Why, this ain't like the old coot at all! Then I get it. He is on his good behavior, seeing he is due to go up on the carpet in a day or so. He ain't taking no chances on making his record any worse. H-m-m-m-m.

I climb up into the cab where Dirty Dolan is laying his fire. Now Dolan is as stupid a hunk of misery as you would want to meet anywhere, a living example of the saying, "strong back and weak mind," and ordinarily he shows as much emotion as a lump of coal.

So when I say, "Howdy, Dolan, are you feeling better?" I expect him just to grunt in his usual manner and ignore me.

Instead he straightens up, looks at me sorrowfully, shakes his head, sighs lugubriously and mournfully, says, "Poor Mr. McIntosh." Then he bends to his shovel again.

Can you tie that? For all these years Crazy McIntosh has cussed him out, raved at him, screeched at him, driven him like a horse, and now he is sorry the old mule is getting the gate. Some people just never learn.

Crazy swings up into the cab, plunks his bottom down on the hogger's seat, and wipes his hands with a hunk of cotton waste.

The hogger has every appearance of being extra special careful not to annoy nobody, hoping that if he is good just this once he will get let off with a warning by the board of investigators.

I am stowing away my fusees in the engine's locker, so I say casually to Dirty Dolan, "Yeah, I agree with you, Dolan. It is too bad about Mr. McIntosh. Still, he has had his day, and retiring won't be so bad. The worst part of the whole business is the fact that they have broken his spirit."

Dolan straightens up and stares at me with his mouth open. Out of the corner of my eye I can see Crazy has stopped swabbing his hands and has pricked up his ears.

"Yes, Dolan," I continue, "I sure hate to see a

man's spirit broken. Me, I believe in going down with my colors flying. Why, I can just picture the super rubbing his hands and crowing to the dispatcher, 'Ha-ah! I sure broke old McIntosh's spirit! Yessir, on that last trip I let him make he was as meek and mild as a lamb! He was practically licking my boots, the poor old man!' "

Crazy's ears are now brick-red, so I deem it time to slide out of the gangway and down to the roadbed. Anyway, our train is rolling in from Windsor.

When the other engine cuts off and trundles over to the roundhouse I throw the switch and Crazy backs down to the train. I couple our engine on to the train and walk back a few car-lengths, testing the air on the cars. I noticed that the first fifteen boxcars have big red placards tacked on them reading, *Explosives! Handle with Care!* It looks like we got a munitions train.

I climb back up onto the engine. Crazy ejects his quid out the cab window, reaches into a pocket of his overalls, pulls out a ratty plug and gnaws off a fresh chunk, rolling it into his leathery cheek. Then he pulls on his gauntlets and looks thoughtfully over at the depot.

Jelly-belly Bates is waddling across the platform toward us with the orders.

He hands them up to Crazy and hollers, "Now you be careful this trip, Mac! I don't want no more of yer monkeyshines! Yer in enough trouble now, but if ya behave yerself, I might use me influence with the super on yer behalf!"

Well, it so happens that Crazy hates Jelly-belly's guts, considering him a spineless old woman not fit for any railroad. He ain't never forgiven Jelly-belly for throwing the air on him one time when he was trying to run ahead of the International Limited.

Crazy expectorates neatly between Jelly-belly's feet and hollers, "Ya don't say! Ya don't say! Are you riding with us, Mr. Bates?" Then he stands up, heaves the Johnson bar back into reverse, whoops three times on the whistle and yanks on the throttle. Old 2452 snorts in an outraged manner, bellows, and heaves back against the train to pile some slack into her.

Well, sir, we hammer those cars back so hard it sounds like a huge roll of drums, and my knees turn to water as I recollect how we got all them explosives right behind us.

In fact, Jelly-belly and a couple of guys who are crossing the depot platform dive flat on their faces and cover their heads with their hands in a very nervous manner.

Crazy grins sourly, throws the Johnson bar forward, turns on the sand, pulls the whistle cord twice and eases back on the throttle.

The big hog starts to slide forward, then the exhaust thunders deep and loud as we pull the slack out of the train and slowly pick up the load.

Our drivers slip. Crazy slacks off on the throttle, gives her more sand, then more throttle.

Our exhaust bellows a deeper note and we are rolling out of town. Crazy keeps hooking the throttle back, a bit at a time, as fast as she will take it, and we bark out of the yards like we are a passenger run.

CRAZY sticks his scrawny neck out of the cab window, looks back, and brays gleefully. I look, too.

Sure enough, Jelly-belly Bates is climbing to the side of a boxcar back there with his fat bottom quivering in the breeze, wishing he didn't have to waddle all the way over the top of the swaying train to his caboose.

Crazy pulls in his head, glances at the gauge, and screeches, "Dolan! Gimme some steam!"

Dirty Dolan don't even look up from swinging his scoop.

Our exhaust is hammering rapidly now, as Crazy hooks up the Johnson bar, shortening her valve stroke, and we are picking up speed in fine style.

I feel much better, seeing as how Crazy appears to have his old spirit back. Maybe if I keep needling him along, he'll wind up his career with a real flourish. The main thing is to keep him mad at everybody so's he goes right on in his old reckless way. Scotty Leyland, the super, happens to be down in Fort Erie on an inspection tour, and if I work this right he will fire Crazy the minute he arrives with the train. Then the board of inquiry will say, "You see? We let you make one more trip, and what do you do?"

Crazy McIntosh pulls his goggles down over his eyes, rolls his quid into the other cheek and wiggles into a comfortable position on his seat.

Dirty Dolan is swinging his scoop with an easy motion, timing his stroke so that his big foot presses the compressed air treadle just at the right instant to open the firedoors as his scoop hits them. In spite of his general stupidity, Dolan is an efficient fireman.

We are hammering into the junction a few miles east of St. Thomas when, to my surprise, Crazy slams the throttle shut to coast through. Of course there is a slow order here, but he has ignored it for thirty years. Now he is suddenly meticulous.

In the comparative quiet of the coasting engine, I holler over to Dirty Dolan, who is leaning on his scoop watching the steam gauge, "Yeah, Dolan, you are right! I sure feel sorry for anybody that is making their last trip! But if it was me, I'd hang up a speed record that would stand for twenty years! I'd go over this line so fast that every other hogger on the division would spend the rest of his life trying to knock down the record I'd hung up! You can

just bet that's what *I'd* do on *my* last trip!"

Crazy lets out a screech. "Dolan! What the hell ya doin'? Takin' a vacation?" Then he hauls the throttle back. 2452 lunges forward like a willing horse, and we clatter and sway over the junction at about three times the speed limit.

Feeling much better, I climb up onto my seat and settle down.

By the time we rock and pitch and thunder through Aylmer, the Johnson bar is riding in the company notch, the throttle arm is at the back of the quadrant, and our exhaust is drumming in breathless staccato tempo. 2452 is running like a scared rabbit.

I get down off my seat and cross the bucking cab to look at the orders on the hook over Crazy's head. Westbound 91, which has the right of way over us, is due at Tilsonburg, at 4:04. I look at my watch and grin at Crazy.

"Well," I hollers, "it is too bad you gotta crawl into the siding at Tilsonburg and wait till 91 comes along! You couldn't possibly make it to Courtland!"

Crazy pulls his head into the cab, shoves up his goggles, and eyes me speculatively. He hauls out his watch and examines it. Then he takes the orders off the hook and studies them. He puts them back, rolls his quid around his cheek, leers at me and hollers over the rolling thunder of our exhaust, "Bub, you just get back onto yer seat and hang on! Dolan, gimme some steam!"

He pulls his goggles back down over his eyes, expectorates at a whistle post, and yanks the cord, two long and two short, for the crossing just west of Tilsonburg.

We hit the trestle at a terrific clip and, leaning out of the cab window, I can see the station agent strolling out toward the switch at the west end of the siding. He is going to do us a favor (so he thinks!) and throw the switch to let us in the siding, saving us the trouble of stopping till I can get to the switch myself.

Well, sir, if he throws that switch, and we hit it with fifteen cars of explosives at the speed we are rolling, we sure as hell will make tomorrow's papers.

My heart pops up into my mouth, choking me.

Crazy yanks the whistle cord sharply twice.

The station agent, who already has his key in the switch padlock, looks up. We are so close I can actually see his face. He suddenly gets the idea that we are coming gawdawful fast to bend around switchcurves, so he lets go the padlock, wraps both his arms around the post of the switch and squeezes his eyes shut just as we blast by him with a gargantuan roar that must of shattered his eardrums.

I swallow my heart and look back in time to see him swept right off his feet by the rush of wind we're stirring up. It is a good thing he is hanging tight to that switchpost.

I also see the operator run out onto the platform, stare at us incredulously, then run back into his office again.

He sure as hell is going to burn up the wires telling the dispatcher that we ain't waiting at Tilsonburg for 91. Now, 91 is one of our westbound hotshots and she runs on a timecard like a passenger train. The super is awful fussy about our scheduled trains being on time. So if she has to be held at Courtland for us, it ain't going to raise Crazy's stock none.

Only I underestimate Crazy McIntosh's ability.

HE IS hunched over in his seat, swaying with the roll of the engine, one hand gripping the throttle, head and shoulders leaning out the cab window, thoughtfully shifting his quid in his cheek, peering through his goggles at the track ahead and pounding her tail with mad, reckless speed.

The deep-throated bark of our exhaust is drumming fast and furious, with the engine pitching and swaying and rocking in time to it, and the steady hiss-clang of the firedoors makes an obbligato with the clang of the coal scoop as Dirty Dolan keeps her hot.

Well, Westbound 91 is due to pass Courtland at 3:42. So help me, it is just 3:41:40 when Crazy slams the throttle shut and whoops the whistle four times as we hit the curve into Courtland.

The operator comes dashing out of the depot and throws the switch for us and we clatter into the siding without stopping. I go out onto the catwalk along the boiler and down to the pilot, so I can get the east-end switch in a hurry.

Our tail end has just swung into the siding when 91, with Hotshot Harry Haynes at the throttle, blasts around the curve and hammers through the town, right on time.

About fifty yards from the east-end switch, I jump down onto the roadbed and run like the devil is after me. I unlock the switch, throw the arm up, over and down, and hook the padlock through the dog. Our train rolls back onto the mainline without having stopped once.

As the cab goes by me, I swing up into the gangway and grin at Crazy. "I didn't think you had it in you!" I holler. "I thought you was too old for that sort of thing!"

Crazy merely squirts his chew at a telegraph pole and yanks on the throttle.

We cannonball through Delhi, but at Nixon we got to stop and take on coal. When Crazy has eased the hog to a stop under the coal chute, and Dirty Dolan is up on the tender getting dirtier, if possible, as the black diamonds rumble down, I study my watch and say to Crazy, "You know, Mr. McIntosh, you are making remarkable time. If you could only keep it up, you would hang up a record for this run that nobody could break. But of course

you can't possibly keep up this pace, can you?"

The hogger is gnawing a fresh chew off his nasty old plug, and he lets on he ain't listening to me at all. But I can tell by the elaborate way he pretends to be thinking of something else that he is turning it over in his mind.

So I cross to my side of the cab and climb on my seat.

Sure enough, Crazy eases off his seat and climbs up onto the tender. He lifts the iron cover over the water tank and peers down into it for about half a minute, estimating whether or not he can pass up the spout at Simcoe. Then he clangs the cover down and returns to the cab. Our coal is now aboard, so he boops the whistle twice and eases back the throttle.

Now, as I've mentioned before, Simcoe is in a valley. You go down a grade into the town, and up a grade out of the town. The eastbound upgrade is a pretty stiff hill on a curve.

Crazy McIntosh decides he ain't going to let it bother him. He booms down the grade into town at full throttle, banging her tail just as hard as he can, and yanking on the whistle cord to let everybody know his intentions.

We are pitching and swaying and rocking down onto the depot when I see the operator run out with some orders on a hoop.

I swing out the gangway and go down to the bottom step, preparing to pick up the hoop. I carefully hook my left elbow through the handrail so I won't get tossed off the jerking engine, and lean out cautiously, extending my right arm for the hoop that the operator is holding up. He is being mighty careful not to get too close to the edge of the platform on account of we are whamming down on him at one hell of a clip.

Right then I get a flash of inspiration. I realize that these orders are undoubtedly telling Crazy McIntosh to watch his step or he is canned for good. It is very likely a personal message from either the dispatcher or the super telling him to slow down and obey the speed limits, or else.

Well, in another second I have hooked the hoop. I carefully hook my left elbow through the depot and banking into the curve on the hill.

So I use the old bean.

I remove the orders from the hoop, drop the hoop onto the roadbed to be picked up by the operator. Then, I sorta accidently relax my fingers.

The orders go whipping down the side of the train on the breeze.

I swing back up into the cab and nod meekly while Crazy McIntosh cusses me out thoroughly, using most of his extensive vocabulary of expletives.

"Dammit," he shrieks, "it might have been something important, like a meet or a change in schedule!"

"If it was," I point out, "Jelly-belly will throw the air on you from the rear end. Anyway, he'll probably throw the air on you outa pure cussedness."

"Why, that yellow-bellied tub of lard!" screeches Crazy, his thoughts switched offa me, as I'd hoped.

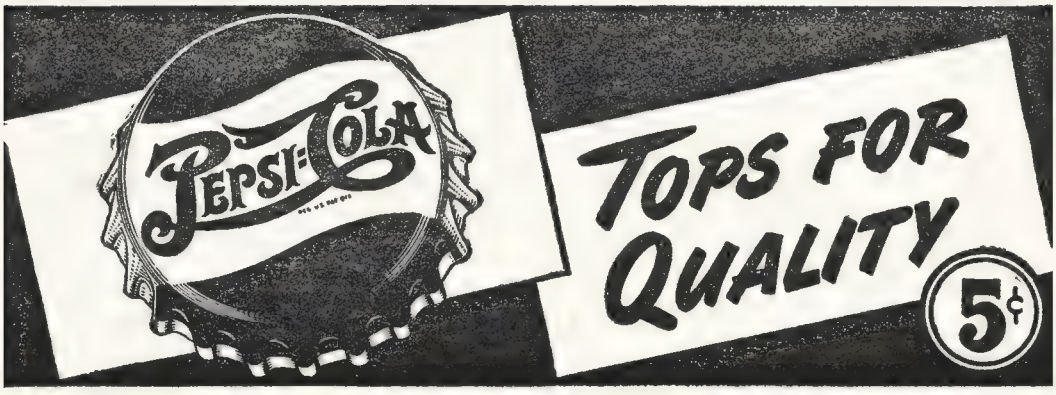
"Listen," I tell him, "what you want to do is keep her rolling so damn fast he don't dare give you the air for fear of derailing the train!"

Crazy don't say nothing. He just drops the Johnson bar down a couple of notches to give her more power on the grade.

I BREATHE a sigh of relief when we roll over the crest at a good clip without the conductor throwing the air on us. In fact, I am considerably surprised. It ain't like Jelly-belly not to take an opportunity like this to hole up Crazy McIntosh.

The hogger soon has the Johnson bar hooked back into the company notch again and old 2452 is laying back her ears and going like a scared cat.

My watch tells me that we are due to meet Westbound 97 at Nelles Corners, and of course she has the right of way over us. Undoubtedly, when we get into the siding there, the conductor is going to make sure we stay there.



But when we come drumming into the straightaway at Nelles Corners I get the surprise of my life.

97 is in the siding, and her head-end brakeman is highballing us on, giving us the main line.

It takes me a little while to figure this out—then I get it.

The word has been passed down the line that Crazy McIntosh has finally blown his top, and everybody is getting out of his way in order to avoid a wreck, due to his reckless behavior.

I sure have got the hogger where I want him, at long last. His career is coming to a quick end, and no mistake.

I glance across the cab at Crazy, and by the sarcastic grin on his ugly face I can see that he has got the idea, too.

He leans derisively on the whistle cord as we boom past the hotshot in the siding and start down the grade into Cayuga. Here is where I start to have some regrets.

The Cayuga hill is a long, curving grade down, with a trestle at the bottom, and it should be treated with respect.

Crazy McIntosh ignores it.

I am sitting up on my seat, gripping the window of the cab when we rock down onto that trestle. For one awful second I think we are off the rails, and I can feel the engine rolling right over into space.

But she rolls back the other way, and by that time we have shot over the trestle and are cannonballing up the hill on the other side.

I gulp down my heart and wish this trip was over. But it ain't!

My suspicions are confirmed when we hit the next siding and find another westbound in the hole to let us by, with the brakeman giving us the highball.

Everybody sure is making darn certain they get out of Crazy's way. What with his reputation, and the added conviction that he is off his onion, any hogger in his right senses would rather give him the main line and run a little late, than have Crazy pile into him with fifteen cars of explosives. In fact, I am getting a little nervous myself.

The payoff comes when we bank into the curve at Welland Junction, and see that the operator has the switches set for us. This operator, by name of Baggypants Bailey, is a lazy bum who ordinarily would sit on his fat haunches and let you stop and turn your own switches. I guess he figures it is better for him to do a little work than to have Crazy McIntosh forget to stop and blow everybody concerned into Kingdom Come.

We sure are making time. There is going to be no mistake about the record he is hanging up. If we get there alive, every time-happy hogger on the division will be waiting with jealous anguish.

The rest of the trip is pretty well straight running, except that Crazy ignores a slow order where some section men are repairing a small bridge. This here bridge ain't very big, but it is partly dismantled, and blocked up with heavy timbers.

We pound down on it, with me uneasily watching the section foreman waving us down with a red flag. When they see we do not shut off, all the section men scatter, diving to the shelter of the embankment.

Our engine hits the bridge, which sags under us a good two feet, while my heart sags much farther. Then we are across, and I look back to see the whole damn train bobbing down over that bridge like the little cars on a roller coaster.

My heart is practically normal again, when Crazy slams the throttle shut and we are coasting into the yards at Fort Erie, across the river from Buffalo.

I slide down off my seat, steady my shaking knees, and grin weakly at the hogger. Dirty Dolan, who has been dumbly attending to his job all this time, hooks open the firedoors and shakes his head sadly.

Crazy McIntosh shoves his goggles up on his forehead, rubs his eyes, and pulls out his watch, studying it with grim satisfaction while we roll slowly into the depot.

I notice that there is an engine waiting, all ready to whip our train over the border. I also notice that white-haired Scotty Leyland, the superintendent, is waiting for us on the depot platform.

I must admit that my conscience is now bothering me a little, on account of needling Crazy into this wild run. However, it is for the good of the whole division, including me.

In fact, I am feeling just a bit sorry for Crazy McIntosh when the super swings up into the cab and we slide to a stop.

He lets out a roar and pounds Crazy on the back.

"Dammit, Mac," he hollers, "I knew you could do it! I told them guys I could depend on you! Why, dammit, Mac, I'm gonna see that the board of inquiry wipes your slate clean! We need guys like you in times like these!"

In a daze, I drop off the engine to get away from this sickening talk and walk back to uncouple the engine.

While I am trying to figure it out, my eyes catch sight of some paper stuck in the ladder on the first boxcar. It is the orders I let slip from my fingers back at Simcoe.

I pluck them loose and examine the flimsy.

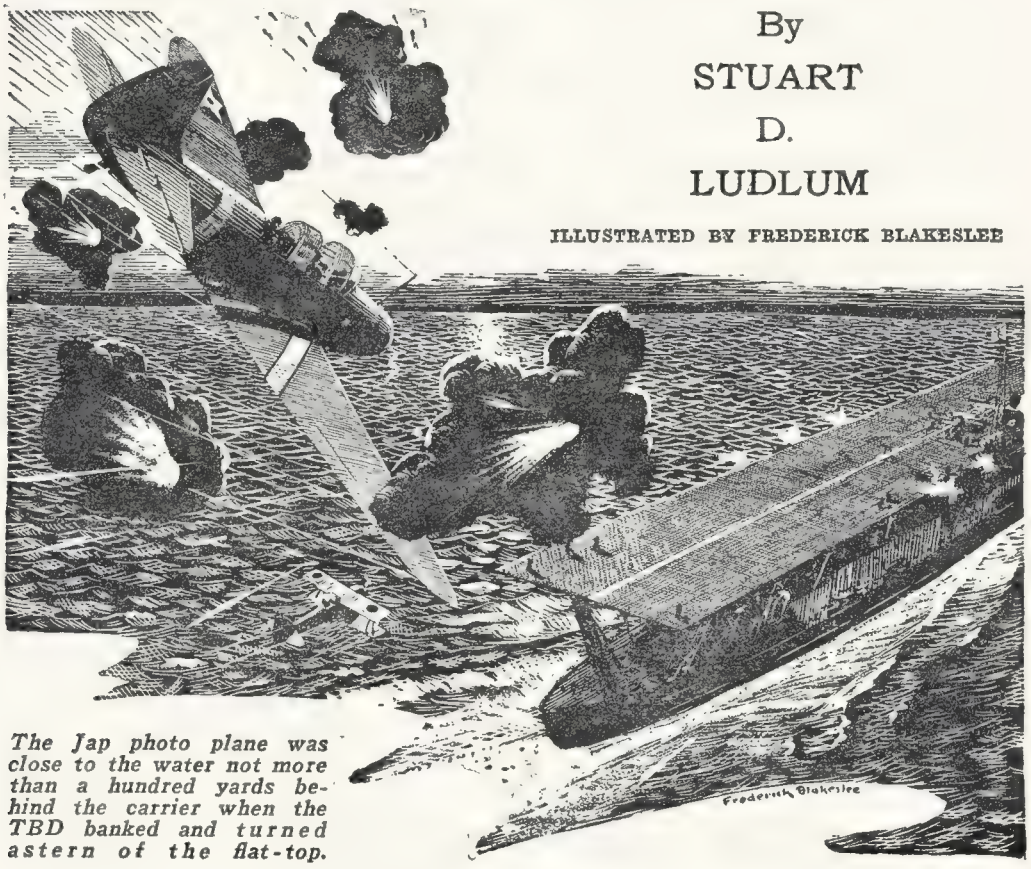
It reads, ARMY STATES THAT DUE TO SUDDEN EMERGENCY THEY ARE IN URGENT NEED OF EXPLOSIVES ON YOUR TRAIN TO RUSH OVERSEAS. AM GIVING YOU A CLEAR TRACK SO HERE IS YOUR CHANCE TO SHOW ME I CAN DEPEND ON YOU IN A PINCH.

Signed: *Leyland, Superintendent*

SCRATCH ONE RED SQUIRREL

By STUART D. LUDLUM

ILLUSTRATED BY FREDERICK BLAKESLEE



The Jap photo plane was close to the water not more than a hundred yards behind the carrier when the TBD banked and turned astern of the flat-top.

THE radio came to life. Danny Barton, AOM 2/c, in the middle seat of the TBD, strained to separate the words from the crackle and bang of static. "Get that Zeke! . . . to land on carrier . . . photo plane . . . film's worth more than . . . Jap flat-top."

Through the anti-aircraft bursts Danny got a glimpse of the plane. The Nip carrier was still fifteen hundred yards away, and the photo plane was on the other side of it, circling astern to come up the groove. It was a weaving groove, for the flat-top was snaking through the water to keep clear of the torpedoes.

Ensign Parr, pilot of the TBD, poured on the coal. He dove for the deck and flattened the old torpedo plane close to the water in an effort to eke every last knot out of her. At a thousand yards he dropped his torpedo, tested his guns—only to find them empty. He had used up every round to blast through the Jap fighter planes.

Matthews, the third-seat gunner, reported his guns empty, too, " . . . the only shooting I can do is with the camera."

Parr called Danny on the intercom. "You're elected. Get that pea-shooter ready for business. Here we go." He banked the TBD and turned astern of the Jap flat-top, then reversed his turn in the hail of shells the screening ships were tossing at them and came out on a course parallel to the Jap photo plane, which was now close to the water, in a tail-down, almost stalling position not more than a hundred yards behind the carrier. Parr throttled back until

the TBD was flying as slow as she would without dropping a wing into the water.

Danny pulled the Browning Automatic Rifle out of its scabbard. He hunched down out of the wind, switched off "safe" and on "full automatic fire" and lined up the sights in front of the Jap plane.

It looked easy. The two planes were flying at just about the same speed. All he had to do was swing and shoot. One short, swinging burst would do it. Here was his chance to square himself—and to make Big Dan proud.

BIG DAN was his dad and the greatest guy in the world. In the '14-'18 fracas hadn't he climbed up out of a trench, stood on the sand bags and shot down a straffing Fokker with a Springfield rifle? The splintered German propellor that had hung over the mantel for as far back as he could remember always spun into Danny's dreams fabulous feats of heroism and accomplishment. He wanted Big Dan to be proud of him more than anything in the world.

Before Danny was ten years old Big Dan had taught him to shoot a single-shot .22.

Danny quickly picked up Big Dan's shooting tricks. And when they caught a red squirrel stealing birds' eggs, they had declared a private war. Danny learned to crack the red-furred hellions in the head as they peered up over branches. He pinned them to the tree trunks when they hesitated in their head-first swirls to the ground. But what he really liked was to get them where Big Dan liked to get them—out at the end of a limb, just before they jumped to another tree.

He got so that he could swing his barrel out along the branch ahead of the racing squirrel, hold on the spot at the end of the limb where the squirrel would hesitate for a brief moment before it jumped. Then, just as the squirrel came to a stop, Danny would send the bullet on its way. Swing . . . hold . . . press. He seldom missed.

Big Dan was mighty pleased that his son took to shooting He made plans for hunting trips, but they'd seldom materialized. Danny couldn't get away from school, or he was coming down with a cold and his mother wouldn't hear of him sitting in a damp blind all day. He was sixteen before he got to go on his first duck hunt with his dad.

"It's one thing to hit a squirrel that stops, and it's something else again to hit a duck that keeps right on going, even though you've got a fistful of shot to throw at the duck," Big Dan explained as they settled themselves into the blind and waited for the graying sky to become a legal dawn. "You've got to try to forget your squirrel-hunting trick and keep swinging as you shoot. There's no waiting for a duck to stop."

During the morning, plenty of blacks came over the blind, circled, and hovered above the decoys that bobbed on the water. Big Dan got more hits than misses. But not Danny. It looked easy, but every time he would swing out ahead of a duck, he would hesitate . . . shoot . . . and the duck would churn the air and bee-line it across the bay.

"You're stopping your gun just as you shoot," Big Dan explained, "instead of swinging through."

His squirrel-shooting tactics had always called for stopping his rifle. Now Danny found himself with a habit that was hard to overcome. But he set his mind to it, and late in the afternoon he lined up on a single coming up the bay, headed straight over the blind.

"Take him, Danny!" Big Dan whispered.

Danny gritted his teeth and swung out ahead of the duck. Just as he was about to slap the trigger, he heard his father call, "Keep swinging, Danny!" He had stopped his gun again. The duck was almost over him. He swung fast and let off the trigger, all in one swift motion. Splash!

"Clean kill, Danny!" Big Dan yelled. "When they're moving, always keep swinging. Remember that."

THE day after Pearl Harbor Danny enlisted in the Navy. Training to be an aerial gunner he'd managed to overcome his habit enough to warrant his instructors passing him, but training isn't combat and not till he saw real action would he know whether he'd really whipped it. He got his first chance to go into action as an aerial gunner at the Coral Sea. Big Dan's last words were clear in his mind. *Planes are like ducks . . . not squirrels . . . keep swinging.*

Danny's pilot made a perfect run . . . launched his torpedo . . . and was on his way out almost before Danny realized what had happened.

As they got out of range of the anti-aircraft barrage, a Jap fighter, high above them, made a fast, smooth turn and started down. Danny held his eyes on the Zeke and checked his machine gun with knowing fingers. Everything in order, ready to shoot. As the Zero dropped closer, he glanced through the illuminated ring sight, placed the pipper in front of the Jap, and tracked it along the imaginary skylane down which the Zeke would have to fly. He swung the pipper down along this curve just as though it were the branch of a tall pine tree. Then, suddenly, the outline of a red squirrel became superimposed over the Zero and grew larger right along with the oncoming Jap plane.

The two images, the plane and the red squirrel on a branch, merged into each other faster and faster. "Got to keep swinging," Danny told himself. Then, just as he was about to let off his first swinging burst, the airplane evaporated.

There was the squirrel, at the end of a branch, hesitating. Danny fired.

Streams of red tracer arched ineffectually behind the tail of the Jap, whose small-caliber guns were blasting, aggressively seeking the range. Danny knew he had stopped his gun and missed. His ship shuddered as two twenty-millimeter shells slugged into the engine and exploded. It horsed up and down in futile plunges, then nosed down in a silent glide, engine dead.

It wasn't till afternoon that a friendly floatplane spotted them. They were picked up just before dark. Danny was grounded and assigned duties on deck.

A month later, off Midway Island, a new torpedo squadron was aboard Danny's carrier. He was given the job of nursing the guns of Ensign Parr's TBD to keep them in fighting trim.

When the Jap fleet was spotted and the attack force was preparing to take off, Parr assigned Danny to the middle seat. "Not as a gunner, but to be there to release the torpedo in case anti-aircraft fire puts the electric release out of kilter."

"And bring along an automatic rifle," Parr added. "Just in case of an emergency."

The bull horn interrupted then.

"Pilots, man your planes!"

It had been a long ride over the Pacific to the pencil point on the navigation chart board. Just before they reached it, the squadron commander broke radio silence. "Zero fighters—swarms of them—blocking the road! Shove 'em aside!"

They didn't shove easily, but Parr burned one and Matthews another before they located a Jap carrier under a shelf of clouds. Then suddenly the radio had come to life with the message about the photo plane. . . .

DANNY was swinging the automatic rifle ahead of the slow-flying Jap. In seconds it would drop onto the flight deck with its precious camera record. Calmly, coolly he checked the speed of the enemy . . . speed of his own plane . . . angle of deflection . . . velocity of bullets . . . everything. This time he had to do it right.

When they're moving, keep swinging. Big Dan had said.

Danny was ready to fire. One short swinging burst would do it. Here was his chance to square himself—and to make Big Dan proud.

The Jap plane melted away and that inevitable outline of a squirrel appeared, crouched at the end of a branch, hesitating. He fired. Spurting tracers burst from his rifle. And angry tears washed everything else out of Danny's vision. He had stopped his gun again.

The Jap plane bounced onto the flight deck. Its hook caught the arresting cable and it stopped short . . . like a squirrel hesitating at the end of a branch. Danny's first burst tore into its wing tanks. It smoked . . . then exploded in a sheet of orange flame. Matthews snapped his camera.

Big Dan's German propellor now shares the spot above the mantel with Danny's Distinguished Flying Cross and the photo of the exploding Jap plane, bearing this inscription: *Scratch one red squirrel . . . the swing has yet to come.*

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LOST FACE

By SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL

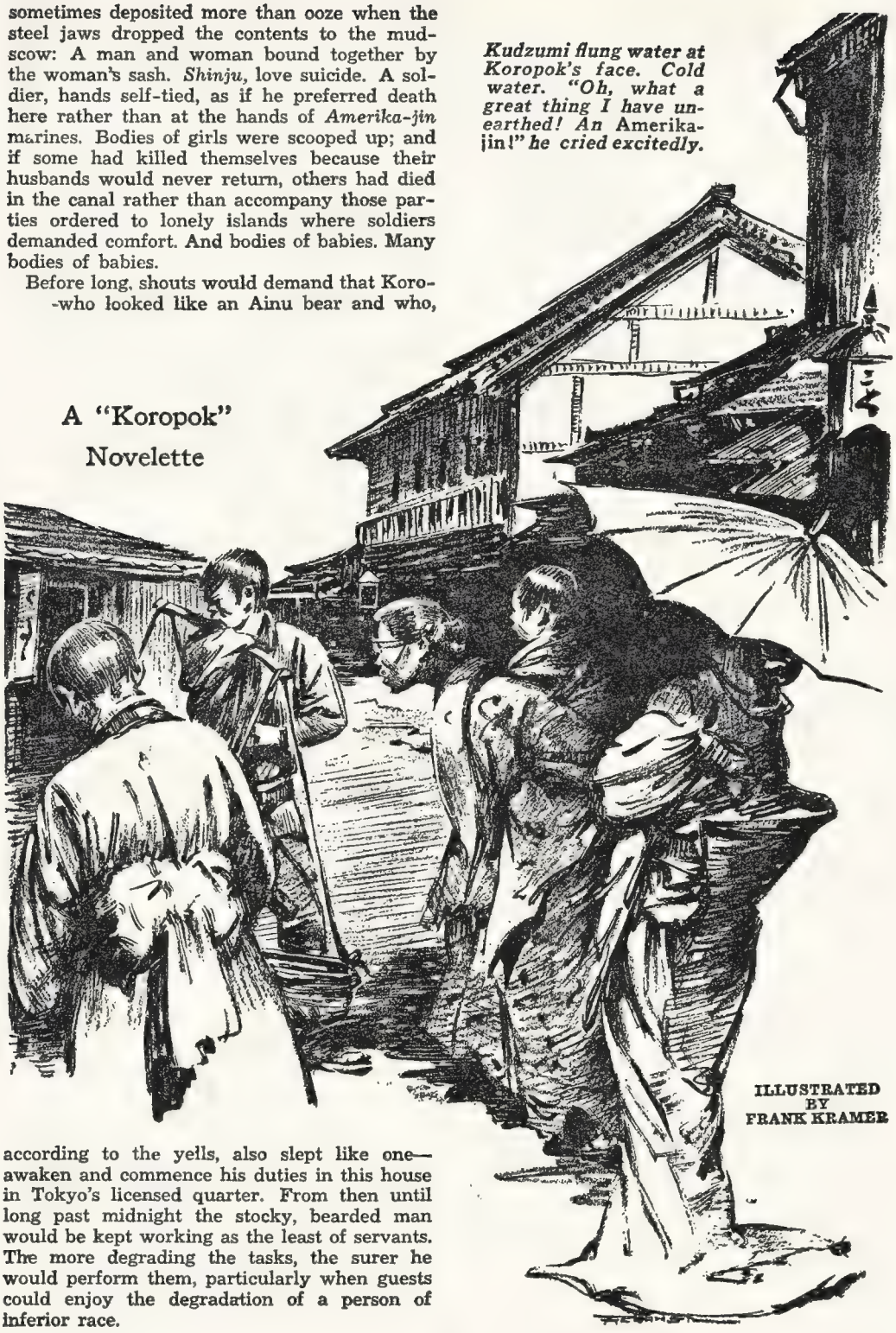
IT WAS in Number Nineteen, and dark with the velvety blackness of early morning. The entire household slept, the dancing girls and singing girls and the withered old maid-servants and the one remaining man-servant, the pariah known as Koropok the Ainu. The nightly guests, Japanese officers and Tokyo officials, snored away, full of saki and Scotch from Singapore and brown Sumatra beer. On thick quilts the manager slept restlessly, as if remembering even in sleep that another increase in taxes would further reduce his profits.

None were disturbed by the *whirr-clank-clank-splash-whirr* of the dredge which worked night and day on the nearby canal, keeping the mud-bottomed waterway open for the barges which assisted Tokyo's beltline railroad in pouring war freight to the wharves. If the scoop dripped mud and slime when it emerged, it

sometimes deposited more than ooze when the steel jaws dropped the contents to the mud-scow: A man and woman bound together by the woman's sash. *Shinju,* love suicide. A soldier, hands self-tied, as if he preferred death here rather than at the hands of *Amerika-jin* marines. Bodies of girls were scooped up; and if some had killed themselves because their husbands would never return, others had died in the canal rather than accompany those parties ordered to lonely islands where soldiers demanded comfort. And bodies of babies. Many bodies of babies.

Before long, shouts would demand that Koro--who looked like an Ainu bear and who, according to the yells, also slept like one—awaken and commence his duties in this house in Tokyo's licensed quarter. From then until long past midnight the stocky, bearded man would be kept working as the least of servants. The more degrading the tasks, the surer he would perform them, particularly when guests could enjoy the degradation of a person of inferior race.

A "Koropok" Novelette



Kudzumi flung water at Koropok's face. Cold water. "Oh, what a great thing I have unearthed! An Amerika-jin*!" he cried excitedly.*

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK KRAMER

The officer looked down at the sleeping Ainu, Suriga's round, oily face peering over his shoulder.

The outcast who slept in foul quilts often wondered what the Japanese would think if the time ever came when they learned that he, Nineteen's seemingly servile *hakoya*, instead of being a despised pariah, was an enemy capable of resistance. In his disguise as a timid Ainu, among which people he had lived as a boy, he had been able to cause the Japanese plenty of trouble without being suspected. The slightest suspicion meant that he would be killed, slowly.

Now, Llewelyn Davies, called Koropok, slept. He smiled, as if envisioning the new bombing attacks on Japan's vitals, the steel mills. Perhaps the pilots and bombardiers were again being briefed for attacks, contemptuous of the frightened threats made by hysterical Radio Tokyo, and only made grimmer by what happened to prisoners. One of these days the bombers would be fighter-escorted, by ships different from the P-40s which Lieutenant Davies had flown at Manila.

Lew stirred. If he had been anywhere save where he was, he would have glanced at a watch; now, waking came by slap or kick. He no longer worried about detection. He was secure at Nineteen, accepted for what he appeared to be. It was a far safer place than any pariah village on Tokyo's outskirts, where gendarmes ranged daily in dreaded pairs on guard, lest some peaceful Ainu, driven mad at last by the torturing Japanese, might rush to railway tracks and, by throwing his starved body under the engine-wheels, delay a shipment of munitions. This had never happened; but the authorities, knowing what had been done to Formosans and Koreans, Chinese and Ainu, watched nervously for any sign of vengeance.

No one watched the *hakoya* Koropok at Nineteen. It had been the finest spot for harboring the single American on the loose in Japan, and Davies, black beard grown thick, face gaunt, had made the most of it.

His cotton sleeping-kimono was so tattered that even the oldest maid-servant did not want it as a cleaning-rag.

As he slept, the dredge in the canal which ran through the licensed district clanked away. Into the rhythmic sound was blended another, similar, and approaching. Footsteps. Not that of clacking *geta* on the street, nor of straw sandals within the house. The sound of booted feet.

A harsh summons, with each *k* like a cough, spoke in the entrance hallway. The awakened manager's sleepy but unctuous response only caused Davies to burrow deeper into his molting quilts. When Suriga, the manager, protested, *"Sore wa domo chito shinjtraremasenu!* I can hardly believe it!" to what was said to him, Davies heard nothing at all in his heavy pre-dawn sleep.

"Wak-k-k-karimasu k-k-k! Take us to him!"

The heavy footsteps advanced along the corridor, past the kitchen, to the hole were Koropok kenneled. A flashlight cut a yellow circle in the smelly gloom. Davies, face away from it, did not stir.

Standing over him was a gendarme officer, one hand about the flash, the other on the butt of his holstered automatic. Behind the thin-faced officer were two of his men, the dreaded government police, one with handcuffs waiting. All were immaculate in dark uniforms and shining boots. The beaks of their stiff caps had a vulture-like droop. Behind them was Suriga, his round and oily face rolling from side to side above his naked chest, his eyes popping, his mouth shut only because of the universal fear of the gendarmes.

THE officer's lips curved in a thin smile as he looked down at the sleeping *hakoya*, the Ainu dog. He said nothing, nor gave any order, as if words were not needed for what was to be done; then he stepped back slightly, nodded to his men, who grinned also, and without further preliminary he kicked the sleeping American as hard as he could. Almost at the same instant the pair behind him jumped forward and dragged the kicked man to his feet, twisting his arms behind him. The flashlight burned into Davies' eyes.

For the smallest fraction of time he was without thought, and every muscle was rigid. The pain in his back where he had been booted told him the method by which he had been awakened. Then, *This is it!* thought Lew.

He made no resistance.

The thin-faced gendarme officer was staring at him intently. *"Dok-k-ko k-k-ka de mita yo*

ni o'masu," he muttered. "I have seen him somewhere."

You have, Davies agreed silently and with sinking heart. *You worked in the Luneta Bar in Manila. You're Kudzumi, the fellow we called K-k-k-katy.*

Suriga said, "Assuredly you have seen him. He has acted as messenger to important personages. Oh, he has often gone to the residence of the baron himself." The manager made a dutiful little bow. "The baron has declared himself pleased because Koropok would run all the way. Oh, the baron is not going to like this! No! When he learns about it—"

"It will be too late for him to do anything," snapped the officer. He continued staring at the man known as Koropok, while Davies waited. At last Kudzumi grabbed the American's black beard and gave it a furious jerk. "Do not lie," he snarled. "Where have I seen you?"

Davies stood with lowered head, not because it was proper Ainu-fashion when in the presence of a Japanese officer, but because Kudzumi's hold on his beard forced his head almost against his chest.

He said, in clipped Ainu dialect, *"Shir'senu goz'asu."*

"You do not know? You are a liar!"

"Correct what displeases you in me," mumbled Davies, "but I do not know where you, a great lord, has seen me."

Kudzumi grated, "Where have you lived? Quickly! We waste time!"

Davies told him, naming the Ainu settlement in north Japan which could be verified. He knew he was under arrest. But why? Because of what he was, of what he had accomplished? It didn't look like it. Suriga would do everything possible to retain a husky and unpaid servant; but what did K-k-k-katy mean by saying that it would be too late for the baron to help Nineteen's manager? *If I were merely to be held in jail,* Lew knew, *the baron could pull wires. So either I'm to be executed chop-chop, or shipped off somewhere in a hurry.*

THERE were faces in the opening to Koropok's cubbyhole, awed and curious and frightened—the girls of the household. When it was light they would be herded to the bath and to the hairdresser's, but not again by the *hakoya* Koropok. The youngest *oshaku,* barely thirteen, whispered a question to the honorable cook. The thin gendarme officer, eyes still fastened on the swarthy, bearded face of the "Ainu" as he strove to recognize him, let go his grasp and whirled around.

"Tell me something about this dog," he shouted, "and I will bring my custom to this house. I am a generous man!"

The little *oshaku* said, "He is not very clumsy sometimes when he carries trays with bottles and bowls. Sometimes he is more clumsy. Once an honorable guest was made angry by his clumsiness. Once—"

"Be still!" Kudzumi stared at Davies again. The Japanese said, aloud but as if to himself, "Drinks," while Lew, cold as ice, waited for recognition.

Outside of Nineteen, the dredge clanked away. *Clank-clank-whirrrrrr-splash.* A vendor of *hamanabe,* of clam flesh, lifted a cracked old voice from the eating shop just beyond the district. A two-motored plane on patrol began its dawn flight; and although it was Japanese, it sent the vendor scurrying.

Inside, the sound brought trembling. Oh, the *Amerika-jin* were inhuman; nobody knew when ten of their giant dragonflies, or fifty, or a thousand perhaps, might be bringing death to Tokyo. Inside, the maids cowered, the two gendarmes tightened their grasp on the Ainu, and their officer's face puckered in thought until it was like that of a puzzled monkey.

What more does the ring-tail need? wondered Davies. *He's sure to catch on now. Not even a Nip can be so dumb.*

Pinioned as he was, Lew believed that he had a chance of reaching Kudzumi's gun, to go down fighting. It seemed impossible that the former bar-boy in Manila could fail to put two and two together and get the right answer, which was that the Ainu "Koropok" was an Ai. Forces officer. The time to make the attack would be at the exact moment of recognition; Kudzumi would ejaculate something, and the pair of his men holding Koropok would, as they looked hastily at their superior, be bound to relax their grips slightly. Which would be enough.

You've had your share of luck up to now, Davies told himself. He did wish that he might have continued with his partially-formulated plan to cripple a new and important plastics factory near the district; it would have been fine to hurt these devils just once more. But being killed here would be far better than torture, and he hoped to be able to take K-k-k-katy with him when he went.

Davies' downcast head did not mean that he wasn't watching the Japanese. *How in hell can he miss?* thought Lew, as the officer's face remained puzzled.

Suddenly Kudzumi, realizing that everyone was watching him, and that he had expressed a doubt which he had not been able to solve and had therefore lost a great deal of face, shouted, *"Sore ja i-k-k-ko!* Let us go! If there is anything peculiar about him, I will learn it later." He fumbled for notebook and pencil, and began to write, after handing the flash to one of his men. *"Hak-k-koya* of Number Nineteen," said Kudzumi, writing. "Ainu." He paused. "What is your name, Ainu?"

Davies' mouth said, "K-k-koropok-k-k."

Damn! thought Lew. *Oh, damn, damn, damn! It just popped out!*

The old kurumaya *who pulled Koropok's limp body in his cart grumbled at being impressed.*

"What?" screamed Kudzumi. "What? You mock me?"

The gendarme officer flung himself on Davies, beating with his fists against the pinioned man's face. Davies could have reached the gun, but made no effort to do so. K-k-k-katy still believed him to be an Ainu; and as such he would merely be beaten and arrested. O. K., provided he remained alive in Japan.

KUDZUMI shrieked for his men to throw the hairy animal to the floor —and the kicking began. At first it was a wild, impassioned business, during which Kudzumi howled with rage, aware that the girls of Nineteen would relate the story of the mocking for the amusement of military officer-guests, who would laugh because a gendarme had lost face. Then, as Davies protected his head as best he could with his arms, Kudzumi controlled himself, although his hatchet-thin face was contorted and, hot as persimmons in sun, the same fiery red.

Deliberately, to the accompaniment of the excited indrawn breaths of the maids and the manager's mumbling at this spoiling of his human property, Kudzumi proceeded to kick the pariah Koropok into insensibility.

For an instant Davies wished he had fought. But what good would it have done to shoot one ring-tail gendarme? That wasn't why Lieutenant Davies was in Tokyo. *He must have been ordered to round up pariahs,* Lew guessed, *and he doesn't dare kill me unless I resist.* But as the kicking continued, Davies realized that the gendarmes could lie, and the girls would testify to whatever they were told.

Pain vanished. The room became bright. Skyrockets, pinwheels, yellow and green and silver, whirled before Davies' closed eyes. Must be Fourth of July at Manila. Luneta Bar. Light flashing off glasses polished by K-k-k-katy. By K-k-k-kudzumi. The brown bug. Lew's lips moved silently in a Manila song:

C-c-c-cootie,
Horrible cootie!
You're the only b-b-b-bug that I abhor;
When the m-m-m-moon shines
Over the barracks,
I will scratch my b-b-b-back until it's sore.

After that, not even Llewelyn Davies' lips were able to move.

Early as it was, the district turned out to see the Ainu *hakoya* of Nineteen being dragged by the gendarmes along the street lined with ornately carved buildings. Oh, what a beating Koropok had been given! Why? Undoubtedly because he was fearful of being sent somewhere in uniform, where he would be shot by an *Amerika-jin* bullet or blown to bits by shells from an *Amerika-jin* ship, or, worse, be stabbed by those *Amerika-jin* marines who fought like the fiends of hell. Did he not appreciate such an honor, which included the saving of the life of a Japanese soldier who otherwise would have died? Oh, Koropok really deserved a terrible beating for such ungrateful conduct. And he had received it, as all could see.

His limp body was placed in the first two-wheeled cart found outside the gates; and while the old *kurumaya* who rented and pulled it grumbled at being impressed, because gendarmes always pocketed the fee which a man earned, he did his objecting under his breath. One did not provoke the gendarmes.

The leaven of distrust worked away in Kudzumi all the way to the building into which the younger and stronger Ainu were being herded. Again and again the officer stared at the relaxed face of the man sprawled in the *kuruma*. It told him nothing. If there were anything unusual about the Ainu, Kudzumi wanted to know it before he turned the pariah over to the gendarmes captain; Kudzumi wanted the credit. What he did not want was to be laughed at for a ridiculous suspicion.

Then he thought of something worth trying. "Stop," he ordered. "One of you go into that shop. Bring a bucket of cold water. Make haste."

When he had the bucket, he had not made up his mind exactly what to do. Should he snap a question at the bearded man, when a drench-

ing aroused him? Or should he listen closely to whatever the pariah might say?

"He makes me think of somebody," Kudzumi muttered, half audibly. "He is similar in appearance to a Welshman. Black. Bearded. Could I have seen him when I was on duty in Singapore? Shanghai?"

Kudzumi tried to imagine the *hakoya* in the uniform of a Welsh Fusilier, but to no avail. In true Orient-fashion, he refused to recollect that the beating had been given because he had thought that an inferior had mocked his method of speech. The Japanese never recalled disgraceful happenings, but forgot them instantly.

Kudzumi flung water at Koropok's face. Cold water.

"Ouch," mumbled Davies. "Damn!"

Kudzumi missed neither word. His eyes lit and burned. "So that's what you are!" he snarled, as he danced up and down with excitement. One of his hands gripped the half-conscious man's bare shoulder like the claw of a dredge. "Oh, what a discovery! Oh, what a great thing I have unearthed! An *Amerika-jin!*"

How Llewelyn Davies guessed fuzzily what he must have said, not even he himself understood. Perhaps it was because, as consciousness came, he was about to repeat it. He whispered again, so exactly similar in sound, *"O cha,"* which always sent a maid at Nineteen scurrying to bring tea for an arriving guest; and he added, *"Dann',"* clipping the word *danna*, in the manner of an Ainu speaking Japanese. With that word, meaning lord, he would have bowed to a guest coming to Nineteen. . . .

"O cha. Dann'. Tea for the lord."

Davies could see that Kudzumi was no longer positive. *"Kann' shi' k'sare,"* Lew pleaded. "Please have patience with me. I am only a stupid Ainu. My body believed it was at my master's honorable house at Nineteen. I—"

"Throw him out of the *kuruma*," said Kudzumi disgustedly, with the coughed *k*'s crackling. "He is a complete fool."

While Kudzumi strutted toward the building into which other Ainu were brought, one of the gendarmes was about to kick the pariah some more, until his companion reminded him that the outcasts were to arrive in a living condition and able to work in lands where weakened men would die too soon; an additional beating might send the spirit of the pariah down to whatever gods he dared to have. So Koropok was allowed to limp weakly ahead of the gendarmes.

Davies had heard what the gendarme said. He was terribly bruised, but what was hurting most as his head cleared was the probability that his usefulness in Japan was at an end. He would be shipped off in a labor battalion. Where? What difference did it make? He couldn't do anything about it, either. There was the feeble hope that Suriga, Nineteen's manager, might pull wires to recover his *hakoya*, but this would take time. Even if Suriga managed it, the average life of a Korean or Chinese or pariah Ainu, on some island, was measured in weeks.

I wish I could've done something about this new plastic, thought Davies, as he stood with hanging head before a gendarme captain. But there hadn't been time.

THE captain was barking questions as each Ainu was shoved in front of his desk. Beside the gendarme officer were several army lieutenants, one of whom directed the answers to an army sergeant. When it was Davies' turn, a lieutenant hissed that it looked as if the fellow had been beaten. Oh, yes, agreed Kudzumi instantly, the ugly dog had said impolite words to his master when leaving his master's house, and with the result which could be seen. If proof were needed, Kudzumi's two gendarmes would testify to it.

"Warak-k-k-keredo shik-k-k-kata g-g-g-ga nai," said Kudzumi. "We were unable to prevent it."

"We waste time," grumbled the captain testily.

Davies answered his questions, and the sergeant wrote. Koropok. Ainu. Age not known, but about twenty-five or thirty. Occupation, *hakoya*. Police record, none. Papers in order. Family, none.

"Koropok," the captain said. *"Ha!* A word has been received by telephone. It is suggested that we wait a little in his case."

Davies thought, *Suriga!*

The antagonism between gendarmes and army flared. The lieutenant said, "So you can have him attempt to escape? No! We need men with strong arms. Your orders are to certify to us those men we wish. Well, I wish him."

The captain was angry. The orders were exactly as the lieutenant had stated, but the captain had just been asked, as a favor, to delay the matter of assigning the Ainu named Koropok, but that had not been an order. An order for it would come before long, the captain supposed, because Suriga knew important men. And the captain would have liked to put Suriga in his debt; oh, there was fine entertainment to be had at Nineteen, and, as the manager had intimated, all free, too.

"Do you desire me to get in touch with my superiors?" asked the lieutenant, as the captain sought to find a way out.

"No," the captain said.

He would have gladly blamed Koropok for the whole affair, but could do nothing to the damnable pariah. Kudzumi! That was a different matter.

"I believe," he said, holding down his anger, "that your usefulness here is at an end, Kudzumi. Hold yourself in readiness for new assignment." A notion came to the captain, and

Koreans were marched to the docks to lie chained below decks with the pariahs.

he grinned maliciously. "A new assignment," he repeated.

Kudzumi, face draining of color, bowed low before his superior.

"I will take the Ainu Koropok," the lieutenant repeated.

The sergeant's lips formed the word he wrote. Taiwan.

Taiwan—Formosa. And that, thought Davies, is that. It didn't make much difference whether he was worked to death in the coal mines or in the camphor jungles. It was a death sentence, either way. He knew utter despair.

What followed was like a bad dream. Rough clothes were given the pariahs, some of whom would be shipped to islands where, when the Americans came, the Ainu would be killed by the Japanese at the very beginning of the attack.

The strongest were quickly marched down to the docks, to labor in Formosa, and Davies, that night, lay chained below decks, body to body with Ainu and Koreans.

The coastwise steamer rolled as it hugged the rocky shore, and the pariahs were terribly sick. After following the protective inland water to Nagasaki, the ship joined a convoy, and with it scurried for the Loochoo Islands. From a word here and there dropped by the guards, Davies learned to his grim satisfaction that the Japanese, in their own back yard, were afraid of American subs. What would happen to the chained men, including Davies himself, in case of a torpedo attack, the bearded Koropok knew only too well. At first he wondered if even that wouldn't be better than death in Formosa; but a fellow didn't want to die until he had to.

The pariahs suffered silently. They had suffered all of their lives. Once their fathers, and they as children, had lived in freedom in the wild craggy peaks of north Japan; once the Koreans had lived gently in a gentle land. By now, both had been beaten down. Of all the men chained on the ship, only one thought about fighting, chained and finished as he was.

I'll bet, thought Davies, *that before I'm worked to death I get me a couple of niee, fat, nasty Nips.* A gendarme for choice.

Kiirun Harbor. A train. Taihoku, and out of Taihoku. Rice on the bottom land, and graves. Sugar-cane and beans and sweet potatoes. Indigo. Bullock and coolie-carts. Pole-burdened carriers trotting chop-chop fashion along narrow trails. Water-buffalo. Japanese women in drab kimonos, and Cantonese women, and Foochow field-women with three long pins as head-dress, and Formosan women, brown and slender, in trousers, jackets and mushroom hats, shoveling ballast along the railway.

Davies saw none of this. He and other pariahs were in a box car, ventilated only at the roof, where a guard sat, rifle poked through the hole. He came down only once, to stare in the gloom at a half-alive Korean who had been unable to eat anything since leaving Japan. He stared at the dying man solemnly, said, "Ko-matta mono da. He is worthless."

The guard cut the sick man's throat with his bayonet.

No one moved or spoke. No one moved even when the guard turned his back and clambered up the ladder to his post on the car's roof.

Only the man called Koropok had hands which were clenched to fists.

He thought, *Getting rid of just one Jap like the guard would be something.* He cursed the guard as silently as the Korean had died; and then he cursed himself. *Quit being sorry for Lew Davies,* he told himself bitterly. *Quit wanting to keep on doing big stuff. Do what you can, wherever you are. Kill one Jap. Hell, an infantryman is just as important as a bombardier, even if a bomber can kill a hundred Nips. What you need is a powerful kick in the pants.*

For a second, wild notions came to him, such as organizing the pariahs and Koreans where they were sent to labor, and killing their guards and escaping to the hills, where they could descend on the Japanese by night. But when he looked about at the beaten-down men, he realized the hopelessness of such a plan. But, damn it, he would find something to do, somehow. It would be far better to be killed in the performance of his duty than to die, exhausted, working for the ring-tails.

Davies felt better after that.

CHAPTER II

THE SKY-TIGERS

WHEN the train stopped, the Ainu and Koreans were checked and then chained together and marched through the street of a small mountain village. The trail on the eastern side of the village started gradually, narrowed, and then steepened. In five minutes the ascent became difficult, and Davies wondered if there were no easier way to wherever they were going. It seemed impossible that anything could be transported along such a steep and mountainous way, or over the slender, swaying bamboo-and-rattan bridges by means of which the ravines were crossed.

Signs in the village, and marks on rattan-tied bundles and crates there, had told Davies where he and the others would go. To the camphor jungles. It was said in Tokyo that when a Japanese was sent to the Formosan hills, sooner or later his ashes would be sent back to Japan, but without the ash of his head being included in the little black and silver lacquered box. His head would remain in Formosa, a trophy of the savage native Taiyals, whom the Japanese were able to include in the East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere only when dead.

Few soldiers could now be spared as guards to protect camphor production from the attacks of the savages. But when the war was won, Tokyo promised, the native Formosans would find out what the Koreans had already learned. Oh, the nasty savages would pay a price for their uncivilized behavior!

Soon Davies learned why the chained men, including himself, were being hurried at bayonet point up the difficult trail where each surmounted ridge showed only a higher and steeper one behind it. He had found it out by the time he saw the first long-abandoned Taiyal huts, hovels of slate slabs overgrown by ferns which grew taller than the roofs. The reason was simple, and very Japanese. Those men in the gang who were unable to keep the pace, who fell from weakness brought about by confinement and insufficient food, were immediately unchained. They were stripped, unresisting, of their coarse new clothes. Then they were stabbed and, as they were dying, were tumbled down into a ravine.

"This is how I would kill an *Amerika-jin* pilot!" a guard would scream, as his bayonet ripped at a fallen Ainu. And, "This is what an *Amerika-jin* marine can expect from me!" another would squeal, hopping up and down as he stabbed.

Only the hardy ones, who would last a while and repay Japan for the food which must be given them, finally reached the jungle camphor-camp.

There were brown slender Formosan women shoveling ballast along the railway.

It was in a clearing. The path led to a guarded, electrified barbed-wire fence; inside were crude low buildings and, in sheds with open sides, the camphor-stills with their iron *namsho*-type stoves. Not all of these were smoking, nor were there great piles of camphor chips waiting to be fed to the retorts. The camp was short of workers. It needed men, to cut down the giant trees to the east of the camp and deeper in the jungle, and to carry the sacked, pungent chips back to the stoves for distillation. It needed men to take the pure-white camphor, exactly resembling snow, and the exudations—the red, brown and white essential oils—down the none-too-easy miles to the hand-cars.

Such a man was Koropok.

Another man, now also considered expendable, was standing inside the ten-foot-high fence. The first words which Davies heard, as he shuffled with the others through the gate, were, *"K-k-k-kita k-k-k-ka?* Is he here?"

He means me, Lew was sure. *So I get the works.*

Kudzumi, standing beside the guard officer he was relieving, was shoving up the lowered head of every chained man, looking for one in particular. The Japanese was no longer in the immaculate uniform of a gendarme. Because of his brief service, his new khaki had not been tailored to his thinness; there was too much of it across the shoulders, and around the middle and not enough in the leg, and his face, from

the moment he had arrived, dared anyone to comment.

He had been on the same ship as the impressed Ainu and Koreans; he had come part way to the camp in a hand-car pushed by Chinese and then, the final miles, along the easier way ordinarily taken. Even this less steep ascent had been unpleasant for the stuttering ex-gendarme who, despite his thinness, had enjoyed many gendarme prerogatives and had lived luxuriously. Being a Japanese, he did not blame himself for this new assignment. Nor did he blame his superior, which would have been unpatriotic, as well as futile. He had someone better to blame: Koropok the Ainu.

The officer whom he was relieving was all smiles, because he was getting away alive; but to Kudzumi this cheerfulness said, "Oh what a fool is Kudzumi, now assigned to the worst place in the Empire! What face he has lost!"

What the retiring guard officer did actually say, and mean, was, "You are fortunate. I wish I had been sent men as strong as these." Perhaps the officer thought to soften what was obviously a blow to the former gendarme, for he added, "Doubtless you will make a name for yourself here."

"I will make a name for myself," said Kudzumi, each *k* like a whip's crack, "but not in the way you mention. Oh, how I will force these animals to sweat! How I will make them wish they had never been sired!"

To Davies, as he shuffled nearer in his place along the chained line, it sounded exactly like the boasts of the men who had killed the faltering ones. His turn, he was sure, was not far off.

The retiring officer shrugged. There was a problem, he stated. If the laborers were badly beaten, they would not work. And if they did not work, there would be no camphor, which was in demand for some new celluloid compound which would assist in winning the war, and which was being shipped out of the camp in too small quantities. "If there is any falling off in shipments," the officer said, gravely, "let me assure you, as one who knows to his sorrow, that somebody in Tokyo will want to know about it. Because if—"

"Are you intimating that I do not know my duty?" demanded Kudzumi, turning away from the slowly-passing line of chained Ainu and Koreans, and causing Davies to hope for a short respite before the Japanese discovered him. "Is that what you are saying? I do not permit such a statement. I—"

"You are no longer a gendarme," the other said flatly, "nor am I an Ainu. So speak more politely, if you please."

"*N' moshi wak-k-ke,*" said Kudzumi. "Please excuse me." What lost face! Then, resuming his examination of the arriving gang, his eyes blazed. He began to shake with contemplation. His "*Ma!*" of satisfaction rocked him.

He had seen Koropok, now in striking range. He slapped him with all his might; and because the Ainu and Koreans ahead of Davies continued shuffling along, all in line and chained together, Kudzumi, frothing, was forced to follow the procession to keep up with his victim. As the former gendarme raged and slapped and kicked, he began to inform Koropok what was going to happen to him.

THE relieved officer muttered, "*Kono baka yaro.* How the damned fool gabbles! He is a low-class fellow. I am glad that I do not serve with him." The officer wondered what an Ainu could have done to have aroused such vindictive anger. It was none of the officer's affair; but if Kudzumi had been less nasty and impolite, the officer would have explained, in a roundabout and subtle manner, that a performance such as this was causing Kudzumi to lose face in front of the guards. "He is a regular gendarme," the officer muttered, and strode away.

The last thing which he heard was Kudzumi's, "You will go to the most dangerous places, you Koropok! Oh *I* will not kill you myself! Oh, no! Once I gave you a bit of what you deserved, and my patriotic action was not understood. Now, when you die horribly, it will be the savages who kill you!"

Davies, head spinning, managed to flinch like a beaten animal at each furious blow. His own anger was burning blood-bright within him; if he had been loose, nothing could have held him off the ex-gendarme. Kudzumi's last performance was to grab the thick, black hair of Davies' head, as if trying to tear it off.

"The savages," jeered Kudzumi, "will admire such a hairy, dirty head as this, Koropok!" He gave a final tug as he screamed, "The one sort of head which they desire more is that of the filthy, cowardly, uncivilized *Amerika-jin!*"

A stolid guard, removing the chains and replacing them with the short chains by means of which each impressed worker was fastened to the log beside which he slept, stopped more of the tirade. Kudzumi demanded what was being done. When he was told, his orders were that daylight remained and therefore the dogs should be taken into the jungle and worked until dark. "Anything less than that," shouted Kudzumi, to recover face, "would be unpatriotic."

The guard, dumb Japanese field-worker that he had been until sent to Formosa, had sufficient sense to be glad that he was assigned to duty within the camp. He would not have cared to be in the jungle at evening, when a shadow could be a shadow, but could also be a Taiyal prowling for a head.

The tired gang was divided into groups. Two guards were to accompany each of the Ainu and Koreans.

Inside the guarded, electrified barbed-wire fence were crude low buildings and, in sheds with open sides, the camphor-stills with their iron namsho-*type stoves.*

The camphor trees near the camp had already been cleared away. The wilderness, the jungle, was like nothing anywhere in the world. Davies had never seen such a mass of twisted and entwining plant life, impenetrable save where the trail had been hacked, and shutting out the sun. Earth seemed unnecessary for growth; there were innumerable varieties of parasitical plants, drawing life from the growths to which they were attached. Some of the rattans and other strange creepers wound erratically from tree to tree, binding all together in as unbreakable a chain as the one which was again holding the impressed workers. The rattan itself, sometimes as long as five hundred feet from root to tip, was covered with sharp, hooked thorns. Davies could see why the Japanese had been unable to rout the Taiyals, the native Formosans, out of such a wild place.

Gradually, as Davies' gang was driven ahead, the mass of ferns, creepers and wiry grasses

thinned, and an occasional camphor, leaves soft and shining, could be seen, an outpost of the forest-jungle beyond. The path now slipped around the side of a cliff, and the two Japanese guards became doubly alert, as if here there had been the twang of an arrow or the hiss of a knife. The pathway was scarcely wide enough to afford foothold, and one of the Koreans pressed his body in fear against the rock wall. Just as a guard leveled his gun at the slim Korean, the man gathered his store of courage, squeezed his bundle of chip-sacks more tightly to him, and managed to continue, his face like parchment.

Poor devil, thought Lew.

He had made up his mind to this: for Davies, the *shi-ju-pun,* the camphor-camp, would be the finish. The *cavalry,* thought Lew, eyes on the unbelievable path, *will never come over the hill and rescue you, fellow.* Balanced against personal desire to square accounts with Kudzumi was the fact that the destruction of the least amount of camphor would be a more honest carrying out of orders than the killing of one Japanese. Less camphor, less plastic.

Davies tried to tell himself that if he took care of Kudzumi it would cripple the camp's production; but this wasn't true. Kudzumi, with his rages and self-pity, would do production no good.

Chained as Koropok would be each night, what could be done at all?

As he almost made a misstep, with jagged rocks far below, he told himself, *You keep your eyes open, boy. That's all you can do.* He meant this in more ways than one. He had to wait, even if nothing came of it.

Camphor trees, of insufficient size for cutting, were becoming more numerous. Through their tops Davies could see densely forested hills, a foreground for a mountain with wavelike peaks crowned with snow. Beyond that mountain must be the slopes down to the Pacific, beyond which lay the chain of the Marianas. South was the Bashi Channel, Luzon, Manila, from which Lieutenant Davies had been sent . . . so long ago. Manila, where K-k-k-katy, the polite and smiling bar-boy, had done his stuff so well for His Imperial Majesty's Intelligence.

It was sheer relief for Davies to swing his axe, when the guards finally selected a tree suitable for cutting. The bite of steel into wood, the clean pungent smell of camphor, the start of his own sweat, made a fellow forget things. It made him remember things, too: kindling at home, coffee and bacon and eggs sputtering. Home, home, home . . .

"A good worker, that pariah," one of the guards remarked to his mate. "He has seen an axe before. Our output should be good. Perhaps you and I will receive some reward because of what we accomplish here. Yes, I should like a cigarette! I wonder why our new commander is angered with him?"

"In some way the Ainu must have caused the honorable commander to lose face," the other guard surmised. "How? Who can tell?"

"This is a fine country in which to lose face," said the first; and, although both giggled, they saw to it that their weapons were ready.

The camphor tree on which Davies and another pariah were working was a splendid one. Fully thirty feet in circumference at the base, it towered high into the late afternoon sun. The tree was not being immediately felled. Chips, from as high as the axemen could reach, were being clipped from the standing giant; the tree would fall when enough had been cut away.

Some of the other weakened pariahs chopped at their trees as if, as one guard said, they were paring fingernails. Before long the lash was applied.

Bite of axe. Sweat. Sun and jungle silence. A lowering sun and a greater jungle silence. Bite of axe . . .

When the tree shivered at last, and fell, the sound of its death roared and thundered up to to the mountain and back, and the jungle came alive.

Long after the guards had sent the weakest of the workers to fill sacks with leaves, from which oil was distilled also, strange birds of brilliant plumage continued screaming in the jungle. A red-bellied king crow screamed a stuttering *k-k-k-kaw chee-djeee!* until Davies' tired face relaxed into a grin. He wished that the commander, K-k-k-kudzumi, could have heard it.

WHEN the sacks were filled, the guards nodded at the same instant. It was not yet dark. A strange aliveness had been born in the jungle, which caused the guards to finger their guns and to shout for all of the work-gang to join them for the return to the camp. Only one man was missing, a small, smooth-faced Korean who had been wearily stripping leaves from the upper branches of the felled camphor tree. When the men sent out to look by the uneasy and fearful guards finally found him, his body had been gashed by a spear. A hurled spear, judging from the wound. The Korean's head was gone.

"He looked like a Japanese," a guard shuddered. "That is why they removed his head, although it was a small one."

The other guard, licking his lips, said, "These Taiyal savages have never seen bearded men like the pariahs."

Davies, plodding back toward the camp, laden like the others with sacked chips, supposed that this was true. The return trip was not fun. It took everything he had, after what had already happened to him, to maintain footing on the difficult trail, to keep from being torn from it by creepers or hooked by immense thorns. And when he returned to camp, Kud-

zumi would be there waiting for him, Lew knew.

In this Davies was correct. After the workers had been counted and fed, they were chained to logs in a dark area of the camphor-camp, where they would sleep until pre-dawn. But Kudzumi had selected a special sleeping-place for Koropok, the former *hakoya* of Nineteen. A log had been rolled between two camphor stills which would be worked all night. It would make no difference which way the night-winds blew; smoke would swirl around Koropok and sting him. It would make no difference which way he turned, right or left; flames from the stills' fireboxes would glare into his eyes. If he moved to his back, he could not shut out the overhanging light by which the retort-feeders worked. He could not turn on his face. The chains were so fixed that this would not be possible.

Kudzumi came during the night to admire his scheme. As the camp commander stared down, he muttered to himself again as he had at Nineteen in Tokyo, *"Dok-k-ko k-k-ka de mita yo ni o'masu.* I have seen him somewhere. I wonder," Kudzumi went on in a sufficiently audible voice for the chained American to hear, "what the dog would look like without that beard?"

Kudzumi would have called for a razor, and shorn him on the spot, but to remove the beard of an Ainu might be serious. Not only Koropok,

"A good worker, that pariah," one of the guards remarked to his mate. "He has seen an axe before."

but the other hairly imbeciles would cover their heads with their arms because of the exposure. Not an Ainu would eat, nor work, nor move. Kudzumi did not know why this was, but it was true. It had something to do with animal-gods which the damnable Ainu worshiped. If the ugly Ainu refused to eat or work, no camphor would be produced. Kudzumi was not yet ready to bring about his own demotion.

It came to him, as he stared down at Koropok and weighed the possible action, that another demotion might mean assignment to some island a little nearer to the *Amerika-jin* than Formosa. Not that even Formosa was so far away any more. But practically to ask for such an assignment, by failing to ship camphor, would be exactly like performing *seppuku.* As Kudzumi spat at the chained Koropok and then moved off, he could almost feel the pain of the thin, sharp knife which should be ripped up diagonally in making the first belly-cut.

My father, thought Kudzumi, *was a saki-brewer, and not a samurai. What right have I to aspire to such a noble death?* This reasoning was face-saving.

In the morning, Davies' eyes were red and burning, and during the long, hard day, it became less easy to keep his axe swinging to wedge off the chips of camphor. At the end of the day's work, another member of the gang was missing. This time his body was not found at all. There was no trace of what had happened. Nor was the vanished camphor-worker a Korean, resembling a Japanese. It was the tallest of the Ainu who was gone.

That night, one of black sky and enormous blazing southern stars, Koropok fell into what passed for sleep. Sheer exhaustion numbed him.

Then Davies supposed that he was half-dreaming, half-mad. There was a whistling in the sky. No other word described the approaching *sssssssszzzzzsssss.* The sound increased so swiftly that Davies began to understand the speed at which it came. In all his life he had never heard anything like it. *Sssssss-zzzzzzssss!* Like the terriffic swinging of a saber through air? Like flashes of lightning? *Sssssss-zzzzzzzsssss!* Then it was gone; but the camp was awake.

Bombers? American bombers? No. Shouts and curses told Davies that American combat planes had passed low overhead, hopping over ridge and mountain. And already another sound was coming nearer, the dull deadly rumble of the bombers which followed. Soon the noise was so huge that the forest shook, and thunder seemed to be smashing the eastward mountain into rocks and boulders.

There were hundreds of them, thought Lew Davies. Where were they going? What was their objective? Why did the fighters hedge-hop? Suddenly Davies' lips formed, because of his knowledge, "Let them all return safely, please. If any of the men must die, let it be in the crash. Don't let the Japs capture anyone."

Behind the giant bombers came more fighters, but high up, as if searching for Japanese to challenge the raid. The sound of their whistling was far away, but the menacing note was there just the same.

A scrawny, half-starved Chinese feeding his chip-retort said, "*Ming yat-yat teng ng't.* Soon it will be hot for these East Island monkeys," to the tender of the firebox. Even if Davies had understood, he was too full of his own thoughts to have been listening.

The firebox Cantonese whispered, "First one sky-tiger comes, to look-see. Then come more. When the Americans finally arrive, I intend to run into the jungle."

"The hill-savages will kill you."

"At least it will be a quick death," was the calm reply.

Davies, chained to his log, knew that his days of carrying out the instructions given him at Manila must be over. But it wouldn't be so bad to die now, with the sound of American attack in his ears; and before long the result of the attack was changing the black sky into a wild blaze like no sunset any man had ever seen.

When the men sent out to look for the Korean finally found him, his body had been gashed by a spear and his head was gone.

The sight of it brought a smile to Davies' lips.

They must've hit Tamsui, he decided, thinking of the port at the river's mouth, *or maybe Keelung. Or Taihoku and the airfields. Or the field I heard about at Nineteen, the fancy new one at Toyen.*

THERE was double consternation in the morning, when the pariahs were being unchained and marched off for work. During the night, a link of the chain which had fastened an Ainu to a log had been filed away, and the pariah was gone. Davies was shuffling along in line with those pariahs who had already been released when the shout went up. His mouth was full of dry millet-cake, breakfast, when he heard, *"It-te shimatta! Ai!* He has escaped! How?"

Davies wondered also. In the excitement of yells and running guards, it was an easy matter for Koropok to slip ahead in the line and reach the scene. He saw the log to which the vanished pariah had been chained, and also that portion of the chain which remained like a black snake on the ground. He was sure, instantly, that the Ainu could not have filed himself free; the filing had been done as close to the former prisoner's body as could be managed by whoever had done it, but much too close for the man himself to have worked the file. And Lew doubted that a pariah would have tried to escape, even if the Ainu had somehow been able to steal a file. Who could have done it?

Kudzumi had arrived, and was screaming the same question. The ex-gendarme stooped and picked up the length of chain which remained fastened to the log, and Koropok stared at the brightness where the link had been filed apart. For a moment all he thought was, *Who could have done it, and why?*—and then he became cold.

He was seeing now that the cut had been made squarely and at right angles; and he knew, from watching metal-pipe-menders, that Japanese began to file by drawing the tool toward them at a sharp and easy angle, just as all Orientals used their tools in exactly the opposite manner from Occidentals. And this meant that the cuts made on the metal stems, or any metal, were always on a slant. In true Asiatic fashion, following the custom of centuries, the cut would be made square later by additional filing. But whoever had filed this chain, Davies was sure, wouldn't wait around to square the cut.

As Kudzumi began to threaten and question and promise reward all at the same moment, Davies' skin was prickling. What had those Chinese been saying? Something about a sky-tiger coming over Formosa for a look-see? Wasn't that it? And the single plane had been followed by a few others, previous to the actual mass attack, according to the Chinese. Certainly no attack in force would have been made without careful reconnaissance.

Suppose one of the ships, on recon, had crashed? Suppose the crew lived? And suppose that, if the Taiyals found these men and didn't kill them, the savages saw the growing of the Americans' beards as time passed, and somehow made the Americans understand that there were bearded men in chains in the camphor camp? The Taiyals would know nothing about Ainu pariahs. To them, and to the crashed fliers, the bearded men would be Japan's enemies.

The severing of the chain must have been done by an Occidental. Tools in a crashed plane would certainly include a metal file.

The wire fence was searched inch by inch, and found intact. The earth beneath it was examined to find where the damnable Ainu dog had disappeared. Nothing was found.

"He did not fly off in an airplane," Kudzumi screeched finally, after the camp resembled a newly taken beachhead in appearance.

The workers were not sent to the jungle, but were chained up again. Koropok, at his own log, had time for consideration.

The Taiyals, the head-hunting savages, hated the Japanese, and with cause. They had beheaded a little Korean; but they had not beheaded the Ainu in the jungle, nor the Ainu who had been chained in the camp. Those two had been carried off, instead of dying as the Korean had died. Why hadn't they been immediately beheaded? Had the gentle Korean been killed, as he stripped camphor leaves, because he was similar in appearance to Japanese? And had the two Ainu workers been abducted, unharmed, because they were so dissimilar? Because they might be Americans?

By the following morning, Lew had reasoned out what seemed a complete case. He had even explained to his own satisfaction how the Ainu had been removed from the camp after the chain was filed: some Taiyal had indicated to the Americans now in the jungle that the wire fence was something which brought death if touched, and any fellow who handled engines and wiring would know what could be done about that. With electrification gone, the fence could be climbed by the rescuer, and by the unthinking, docile Ainu after the chain had been filed. When this had been accomplished, the wires of the fence could be made live again.

CHAPTER III

THE HEAD-HUNTERS

THE jungle seemed more alive, somehow, to Davies, as if the continuing glare in the sky, from whatever was burning so fiercely to the west, had made animals and birds uneasy. Rock-monkeys cried: once a

spotted deer raced across the trail; deeper in the jungle a tiger cat screamed. The birds were restless, flashing back and forth.

The same uneasiness throbbed in Davies. Sooner or later, Kudzumi's memory was going to know Koropok the Ainu for one of the officers who had called for K-k-k-katy in the bar. The camp commander was coming closer in recollection. But it was more than this which was hammering in Davies' head.

Not even the sunrise could vie with the flaming western sky . . . and when the work-gangs were lined up the men made strange shadows within the camp. Kudzumi himself stormed up and down the rows of sad Koreans and humble Ainu; if he kicked one, he slapped the next. When he saw Koropok, he stopped short, staring until Davies feared that the ex-gendarme was remembering.

"Ichido o me k-k-k-katta k-k-k-koto g-g-g-g-ga'masu," Kudmuzi crackled. "Yes I have once met you. But where? *Where?* Oh I recall Nineteen, but it was not there. No. Before that. Shanghai? No. Osaka? No. Manila? Manila? Answer me, *inu!* Was it Manila? Speak, or—"

Koropok the Ainu said, "What is a Manila, O lord?"

"Fool," shouted Kudzumi. *"Bak-k-k-k-k-"*

The *k* in the Japanese word for fool, *baka,* continued as if Kudzumi could not get it out of his mouth. Some Japanese, probably one of Kudzumi's subordinates who had hoped for promotion to camp commander, laughed. The former gendarme whirled, face suffused. Everything else was wiped out of his head. Laughed at, before pariahs and dogs and his own guards!

"Tonight," said Kudzumi, "there will be an accounting!"

The work-gangs shuffled off after that.

DAVIES had a look at the log and the severed chain as he walked with the others. He saw, near the log itself, what he had been unable to see when there had been guards about it; there was a round mark in the earth, made, Davies was positive, by the knee of the person who had filed the chain with a square cut. No Orientals kneeled at their work. They squatted. An American, an Occidental, would have worked on one knee. The circular indentation was so near the log that footsteps had not obliterated it. To Davies, it was final proof.

The work began. Davies' axe slashed off huge chips, delighting the guards, because this gang must outdo all others, lest Kudzumi's anger be aroused. One of the guards even patted Koropok's arm and smiled.

"Okkai ticksha," said Koropok in Ainu, deliberately. *"Okkai!"*

"What does that mean?"

In Japanese, Koropok explained, like a patted dog, "I work like a man."

"Do not let the honorable commander hear you say *'ok-k-k-kai',"* the guard warned, giggling, "or he will turn you into something not recognizable as a man at all. Now cut more chips and do not waste time."

When Davies paused to wipe off sweat, he tried to listen to jungle-sounds. No men had been sent to strip leaves. The guards kept everyone as close as possible, as much in sight as possible. Morning became noon, and noon's time of no-shadows advanced swiftly for Davies this day. He had made his best guess at the time the Korean had been speared and beheaded; but it was a guess only.

At last he could wait no longer.

Standing with downcast head, and with one of the guards actually looking at him, Davies laughed, shortly, as the Ainu had laughed once in the northern province. He was acting as best he could; he lifted his head and looked at the guard, as one who concealed nothing and had nothing to conceal. Then he shouted, "O. K., fellows! O. K.! Come and get me! O. K."

The jungle threw the sound back: *Ohhhhhhhh kayyyyyyy!* That was all.

What did I expect? thought Davies, axe swinging again. *Did I think anything would happen right away?* Or would anything happen at all?

The Japanese guard grinned, but made no protest.

So Koropok chopped away, and the day wore on. It was an hour before Davies yelled again, and the jungle repeated his cry.

When the order came to stop, collect tools, and shoulder the sacked chips, all Davies' hope had gone. *You argued yourself into what you wanted to believe,* he told himself. *It was just something nice to think.*

"You dogs are slow as the *Amerika-jin* when their officers drive the cowards to attack," one of the guards complained. Then he gasped, *"Aita!"* and made a convulsive grasp at the hurled spear which had ripped through him, his rifle falling to earth, and he on top of it, with the spear's shaft pointing skyward.

His mate's finger squeezed the trigger of the gun which the other Japanese was holding. Bullets from the down-pointed gun thudded into the ground a fraction of time before the guard also fell, pierced.

Out of the jungle swarmed unearthly slim and naked figures, silent as shadows; to Davies, in that first instant, it was as if the demons of hell had come out of the jungle. The Taiyals' dark bodies glistened; their heads were covered with wicker baskets shaped like feudal helmets, some of which were topped with deer horns, and others with white, grinning skulls.

The first swift, silent rush was so fast, so unexpected, even by Davies after he had given

up hope, that the American did not see exactly what happened. Some of the Formosans ringed the trembling Ainu and Korean workers with spears. Others had hacked off the heads of the Japanese. Several of the noiseless attackers had, without other objective, seized the fallen rifles of the dead guards, and the revolvers at their belts, and the ammunition also. Not a word had been spoken.

A Taiyal held up the head of a guard.

Then one of the head-concealed figures said, "That way, it looks good." In English.

Davies began to shiver like the pariahs, but for a different reason. His throat was dry and tight. He was cold all over. He was unable to identify which of the men had spoken. Some of the attackers were taller than others; but some Formosans were tall, too. If he had really heard what he thought he'd heard, why hadn't the speaker demanded who it was that had shouted in English?

Davies said hoarsely, "I guessed right."

One of the men who had snatched up a rifle and ammunition belt said from behind the concealment of his head-basket, "And what did you guess right about, you damned bow-legged Nip rice-bag? Talk chop-chop!"

From the way the strange helmet was facing, the American within it believed a Korean, smooth of face, must have spoken. Davies didn't blame the caution shown by the man. Who would expect anyone except an English-speaking Japanese to have called out in the jungle? Even so, Lew wanted to say, "D'you know what it means to have this happen? D'you know how I feel?"

Instead, controlling himself, he said, "I guessed that a Korean worker was killed because the Formosans thought he was a Japanese. I guessed that the Ainu weren't killed because they might be white men. I guessed that the attack in force must've been preceeded by reconnaissance, and—"

"And you *know*," the other snapped, "that those shots were heard by your little playmates, so you are talking until they can get here, eh?"

Something deep within Davies snapped. He had to fight for control as he said, "Take me with you. Question me later, but—"

"The Marines aren't much on asking questions!"

Davies thought he saw the trap. "Nuts," he said sharply. "No go. If you were on reconnaissance, you're no Marine. Sea-going bellhops don't fly."

Someone called, "Run up Maggie's drawers on that one, Major. Maybe the guy has been asleep since the war began—"

"I've been in Japan since the war began," said Lew. His voice rose. "My name's Davies. Lieutenant in the Air Force. Detached from duty in Manila. I—oh, damn it to hell, Major, how can you expect proof?"

Out of the jungle swarmed unearthly, silent figures. It was as if the demons of hell had appeared.

A DIFFERENT voice drawling pleasantly, asked, "And I sluppose you'd like to be flying a bomber again, Lieutenant?"

"A P-40," said Davies.

"I think," the questioner drawled, "he's O. K., Major. Combat Intelligence was told by the Army's G-2 to look out for Santa Claus with a black beard, who might be anywhere." As the tall intelligence officer who had been assigned to the reconnaissance spoke, he walked nearer to Koropok the pariah. Still drawling, the concealed mouth must have been grinning. "Merry Christmas, fella!"

Davies, as hand gripped hand, tried to speak, but could not.

"We'd better shove off," the major said.

The Koreans and the Ainu had stood without interest. What would happen to them? Davies said, "These poor devils will be questioned and tortured as soon as the Nips from camp get here."

The Marine intelligence officer spoke to one of the Taiyals who was holding a Japanese head. He spoke in slow, precise Japanese, school-learned. *"Koto wa deki-masho ka?* Can they go with us? They are not Japanese, but only men who have been treated as you have. They might be useful."

The Taiyal chief's slim body rocked as he said, "They have submitted like dogs. No. They are useless."

"Sayo demo gozaimasho ga," said Davies swiftly. "That is probably so, but some of them are hillmen such as you, in their own land which was stolen from them by the apes. Some of them," went on Lew, doubting it himself,

"would kill Japanese if given half a chance."

"You talk too damn fast," Caldwell, the intelligence officer, chuckled. He added, "If they could get by just a night or two back in camp—"

"One night of Japanese questioning," said Lew, "is more hell than a civilized man can imagine." He added quietly, "I know."

"We can't antagonize the natives," Caldwell explained to Davies. "We need them. Everything depends on them."

Davies turned to the Taiyal chief. Under the Formosan's horned wicker helmet, worn only when on head-hunting expeditions, was a chain of the teeth of animals and brilliant red berries. The head of the Japanese guard was under the Taiyal's arm, and Lew had to force himself to speak to the invisible face behind the helmet instead of to the grinning, close-cropped head.

"They," said Davies, pointing to the pariahs, "are hillmen. If they could kill a hairless ape, as you have done, they would no longer be dogs."

"I," said the Taiyal, "was a slave of the apes. The men of my father's tribe, to which I finally returned, believe the sun opened when the hairy men dropped from the sky. I do not. You are like the men who descended. You are a fighter. Those who stand together like frightened deer are not fighters." His basket-covered head came closer to Davies' bearded, gaunt face. "You, I see, have been their slave also." He paused, and Lew wondered what horrible memories moved the Formosan while he stared at the pariahs. "Let them come with us," he said slowly.

The Taiyal chief grunted a command. The unresisting pariahs and Koreans did as the Formosan leader ordered, shuffling wearily into the jungle, with Taiyal braves ahead and behind, and the chief walking with the Americans. And the Formosan night came down fast, but not until Davies knew that there were five airmen, three of whom had not spoken before; and not until he heard the weird, distant howling which meant that guards from the camp had found their decapitated comrades and nothing else where the camphor trees had been chipped . . .

The Taiyal village, of fifty men, with their women and solemn children, was high on the slope of the mountain. Outside of the little settlement, as if on guard, Formosans appeared magically out of the gloom. The village itself was almost invisible. The huts were only half as high as a man, being built over the excavations from which the walls of the tiny dwellings were built. The interior was paved with stone, as Davies learned when he followed the other Americans into one of the huts and went down the notched pole which served as a ladder. No sooner were they inside, and removing the wicker head-coverings, than women brought food—wild pig and sweet potatoes and taro, all boiled together, and seasoned with ginger root.

The twisted cloth wick in an earthenware bowl gave the most feeble and flickering of lights. Around it the men squatted on the floor, Davies with ease, since he had rested in this manner since being in Japan.

"Give," Major Smith said; and when Davies began to talk, the major ran his hand over his chin, which gave off a scratching sound, being long unshaven. It was a long time, and late, before the major said. "It couldn't happen."

"That's what the Nips think," grinned Lew. "That's why it works."

"Worked," said the major. "Past tense. No more. Now . . . you listen You've got to know what we intend to do." He spoke quickly, incisively. At the end he said, "Tsunum, the chief, is all for it."

Davies felt his heart beginning to pound, and the pounding began to creep into his head. A chance to get back at the Nips! A chance to fight! *And I begin to crack up now?* thought Lew wildly, as the hammering sound pounded away, loud, throbbing. *I get my chance, and can't take it?*

Only then did he realize that the pounding was coming from outside the hut, and wasn't in his battered head at all; the growing yellow-red light slanting down into the hut told him that all was well with him. With the others, who grinned broadly, he went out into the hard-packed open space of the village.

The ferocious Taiyals were celebrating the victory over their enemy. Just beyond where a fire blazed was a post, similar to the Ainu god-posts Davies knew about; and at the top of the post was a skull, to the chin and cheeks of which hair had been glued. Like Indians in the firelight, the native Formosans danced proudly up to the village diety, and, to the accompaniment of stamped feet and fierce and savage prayers, offered to it the latest spoils, the heads of the enemy.

It was a long time before Davies slept.

THE next day, and the next, passed swiftly. Men with whom to talk, and so much to talk about—how a 38 performed, and the fire-power of a 61, and what a B-29 was like. "Damned if I believe it," Lew would say again and again. Marines on the Marianas! What MacArthur was up to. And, from Lew, how the Nips were reacting, and what their pilot training was supposed to be like, from the boastings he'd overheard at Nineteen; and how they were depending more and more on substitutes and plastics, but without proper research men and facilities to do a good job. And about home. Always about home.

As the sun marked the passing of noon on the second day, Caldwell remarked to Davies, now

completely one of them, "It ought to go well. Tsunum's scouts have the picture for us. He was sure that some smarty-pants in camp would lay a trap, which is exactly what happened. That's our meat."

The Japanese commander, Davies learned, had baited his trap carefully, according to the savages who had raced through the jungle and back to the village. No men had been sent to fell and chip camphor on the previous day, but now three parties had been hurried into the jungle. Not only were over half of the laborers now armed Japanese but a shrewd disposition of other guards, possibly men rushed up from the coast, were waiting to ambush any Taiyals who attempted to slip up on the workers. The savages by now knew the location of every Japanese.

"And," said Major Smith, "the notion that we'd attack the camp itself simply hasn't occurred to the rice-bags! They and their fool electrified fence!"

Davies, when the party started out, would have liked the feel of one of the rifles, but the butt of Caldwell's revolver felt pretty damned good. It was difficult to keep from whistling as he walked along single file with the others, led by one of the Taiyals. It was difficult to keep from whistling because he was part of a venture which meant more than the elimination of a few Nips in a Formosan camphor camp.

He wondered if K-k-k-katy would be in camp. He thought so; he hoped so. K-k-k-katy, who had been a gendarme, would never risk his head.

What the Americans wanted was a simple matter. They were uninterested in killing the guards, although this would be necessary. They were after weapons.

Jennings, who had been the navigator, walked beside Davies. He said, "How the natives get through this jungle is beyond me. You're sure you're stopped dead, by some cliff or by those damned thorns on the creepers, but you never are. How many times," he asked, "did you think you were stopped dead, Lew?"

"Plenty," Davies grinned. "Sometimes I was, too."

"Being alone is what'd get me."

"It got me plenty," admitted Davies.

He put his hand up to brush away a jungle-fly, but it was a bit of fuzzy loose wicker from the head-helmet which he, too, now wore. Even if the mission failed or was fouled up, the major had insisted, there was no reason to allow the Nips to realize who was attacking them, nor to let some rice-bag go scooting off and break the news to somebody down on the west Formosan coast.

"But it's funny," Lew said, "how you forget." He thought, *Home! I'll go home.*

By the time the camphor camp was in sight and the attackers were flat on their bellies, Davies could think of nothing else. Home!

Ahead was the electrified wire; one of the Americans was snaking his way toward it. Behind the wire a guard strutted. When his back was turned, the American slipped nearer, until a final dash would take him to the fence, where it would be simple for someone other than a savage to take the heat off the wires of the fence. Several times the Taiyal chief, Tsunum, whispered, *"Sho sho.* Wait." *But* waiting was not easy for the attackers, nor for Davies. He had waited a long time for something like this. Odds made no difference.

Since Japanese had been sent into the jungle disguised as workers, more than the usual number of Koreans and Ainu remained chained to their logs in daytime. *I have been chained for three years,* was in Davies' head. *Three years. Three years a pariah. But that's over. If I'm killed now, or later, I die with my people, fighting. I'm through with this masquerade at last.*

THE Japanese guard was pacing his way nearer to the point where he and his fellow-guard would, with German-Japanese exactness, meet. Just as they came close, bringing their rifles across their chests, a long scream of agony, of horrible dying, set one guard to staring and the other to whirling around. Japanese-fashion, both discharged their weapons instantly, at nothing but the sound, then both ran toward it. Other Japanese, some armed with an imitation of the American Browning, rushed out of the guard-hut, firing out through the fence as they ran.

The heat was off the wire when the Americans reached it and, except for a few scratches, climbed safely over, Tsunum with them. No orders were needed now. The first shots dropped the men with the imitation BAR's. Davies, watching for Kudzumi and not seeing him, did the next best thing: he kept firing at the assistant camp commander until the *click-click-click* of his emptied weapon sent its message to his head. But the Japanese was down, whether from Davies' shots or Caldwell's rifle couldn't be known. With a leader, the guards did exactly what could be expected: they came close together to fight.

"It is very wonderful," Tsunum's muffled voice exulted.

Here was the last thing which the Japanese had expected—uncivilized Taiyals attacking them, and with firearms. Faced with such an unheard-of thing, no Japanese soldier or guard was able to do anything more sensible than die; and dying they were. For over the fence behind the guards now poured the ferocious unsubdued Formosans, announced in advance only by their hurled spears. The Taiyals in their head-helmets leaped joyously to the attack, with a long, long score to avenge and a whiskered god waiting for bloody offerings.

AS THE Americans held fire while the Formosans were finishing up what remained of the guards left in the camphor camp, Davies thought, *I'll bet Kudzumi is drunk. He's in a mess, as the new commander. Since he's arrived, everything has gone wrong. He's losing more face every day, and this will finish him.*

A Taiyal screamed. Davies saw the dripping head which the savage had hacked off. Swiftly, Lew moved away. He wanted Kudzumi for himself. Kudzumi represented Japan to Davies. Kudzumi belonged to him.

Lew hurried to the one painted building within the camp. He didn't hear the cat-stepping Tsunum behind him.

There was a light in the commander's room. Davies' gun was empty, but this did not concern him. Kudzumi, if sober, would be fighting; Kudzumi, gendarme, or not would shout, *"Aaaaaaa! The Tenno!"* and die for His Imperial Highness, the little solemn figurehead of the war lords who believed he was the son of the sun. It was possible that the commander would be in the jungle with the guards, but this Davies doubted. He knew gendarmes too well.

Davies, with his shadow behind him, and Tsunum standing in the shadow, opened the door, gun up as if ready to fire.

Kudzumi was crouched on the floor, on a clean white mat. To his left was a low stand, a fire-box for smoking, and a pipe, the ash

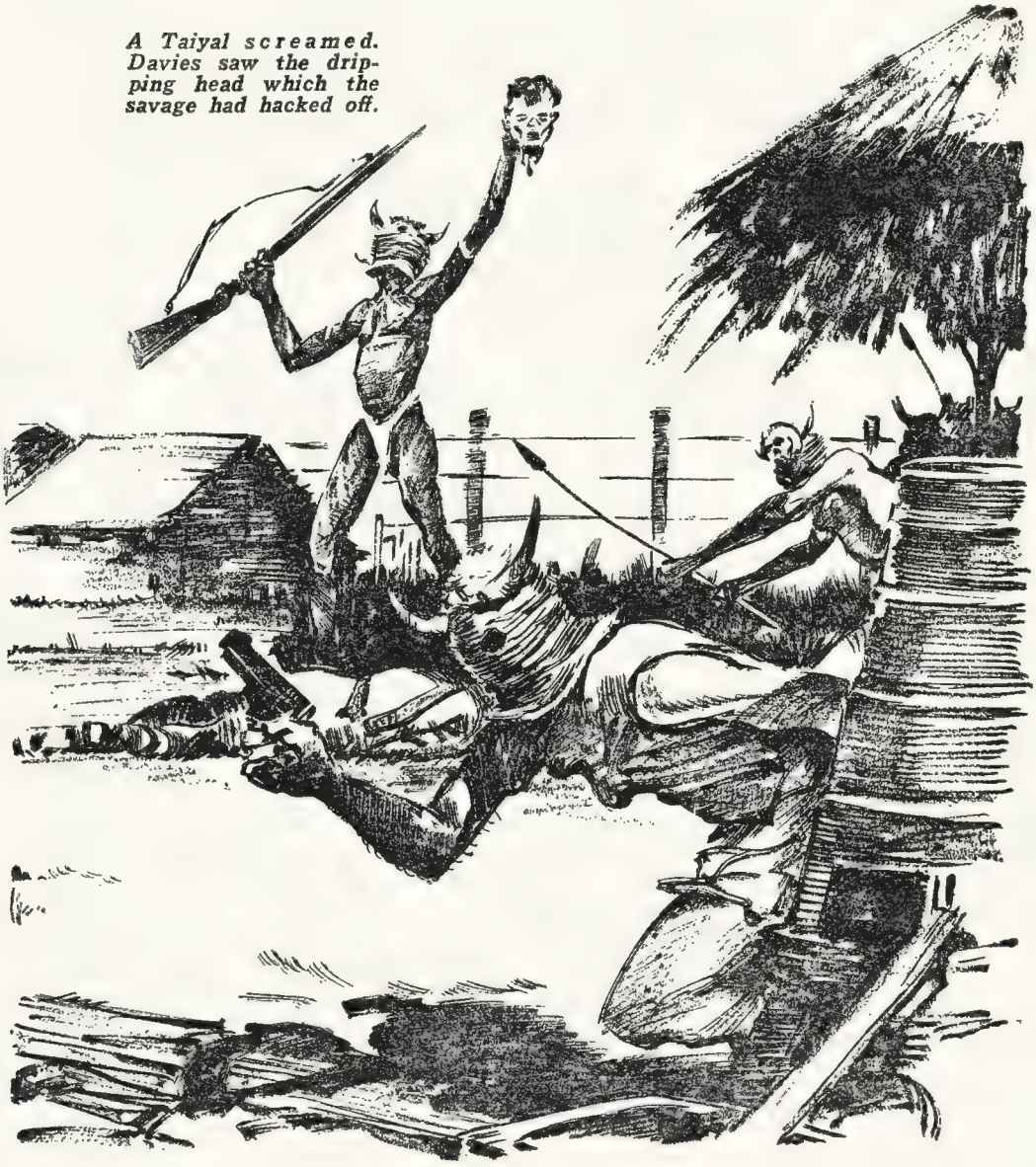
from which had fallen to the floor. To his right, on a piece of faded black silk threaded with silver, was a dirk, the *wakizashi* employed in hara-kiri in *seppuku*. But before Kudzumi was that which did not belong in a ceremony of honorable suicide: a bottle of whiskey. Not much liquid remained in the bottle.

The camp commander, the former gendarme, was in a white kimono, the color of death. The cotton fabric had been carefully drawn away from his belly, into which he must plunge the knife because of his disgraceful conduct in permitting what had happened at the camp even before this final attack upon it. Only death by his own hand would release his entire family from disgrace.

He was so drunk that he imagined he had an audience far different from the two men who watched him.

He swayed slightly, drooled, *"Mada hayo g-g-g-goz'masunu k-k-k-ka?* Oh is it not too soon? Oh, honorable sirs gathered to assist me in honorable death, how kind you are in according me this honor! I am greatly indebted to you. But I have a few words to say before I perform *seppuku."*

He paused, as if wondering what the words might be; and then he whimpered, "Oh, I have



A Taiyal screamed. Davies saw the dripping head which the savage had hacked off.

not been helped by the much-*whissukee!* I do not wish to die! I—"

"Hello, K-k-k-katy," said Davies.

He watched the glaze slowly slip from Kudzumi's eyes. Perhaps nothing else in the world could have shocked the Japanese sufficiently to sober him to any understanding at all. Kudzumi did not move, neither his eyes nor his hands nor his mouth. He looked like a malevolent image of ancient ivory, stained and discolored to a sickly brown by interment in a tomb. He looked like Futsunushi, a deity produced from blood but who was painted as if with no blood in his face.

Davies wanted the Japanese to know. He said, "The next drink I have, K-k-k-katy, won't be served by a Japanese spy."

Kudzumi said, *"Aaaaaa!"*

That was enough. Davies, despite the cruelty and past reputation of the former gendarme, had no desire to play with him. But how the devil did you finish off a fellow who just sat and stared at you? Davies had sworn to get rid of the damnable Kudzumi. And Kudzumi knew now, beyond any doubting, that the face hidden by the helmet must be that of an American.

The Japanese's hand flashed to the dirk. At the same instant, as Davies tensed contentedly to release the force which had been bottled up during his years as Koropok the pariah, Tsunum stepped forward, silent as a shadow. There was a blue flash, like a piece of blue silk before Davies' eyes, as the Formosan swept a long blade in a semicircle; then blood spattered over Davies. A single blow had severed Kudzumi's head.

"Now," said Tsunum softly, from his own knowledge of the Japanese, "he has indeed lost face!"

Davies nodded. He stepped across the twitching body, almost slipped on the mat and then on the blood running to the bare floor. Kudzumi, if Davies knew anything of the Japanese, had left an explanatory note. It was on the desk; Lew's eyes ran over the zigzag characters swiftly.

Of course Kudzumi had performed *seppuku* because of disgrace; of course the camp commander had been ordered to kill himself by his superiors, who thus were able to wash their own hands of any blame because of the abductions and killings; of course Kudzumi had been forced to obey, even if he lacked the courage.

What interested Davies most in the note was this:

> Before cleansing myself of disgrace, I have personally marked certain camphor oils for certain factories. I pray that their use, which will astonish the uncivilized men of the United States, will also bring our victory the sooner.

Davies read this once, and then again, until Tsunum said, "We must go. I see from your clenched hands that the words do not make you happy."

"I just had a dream," said Davies slowly, and then left the room. Tsunum followed, carrying Kudzumi's grinning head.

THERE was no semblance of resistance; all of the Japanese were dead. Davies hurried over to the exultant group of victors, who had already gathered the imitation BAR's and rifles and ammunition.

"Been waiting," said Major Smith. He nodded at the head which Tsunum was carrying. "Something special?"

"The commander," said Davies.

"Rip ho," Caldwell urged. "We've done our stuff.

Lew said, "Before you go, you've got to chain me up."

"No," said the major, "and that's an order."

Davies said, "With you, I'm just another rifleman, that's all. Much as I want it. Here, I might get away from this damned place. I've got to get away. I've got places to get to. The Nips are playing with plastics and camphor oil. I know where it's being done. So what the hell?"

"Knock it off," said the major. "I won't have it. Hell, man, you've been thinking about home! Even if you don't make it, or we don't, look at the fun we're going to have! I know what I'm talking about. So does Caldwell. It isn't just talk. It's the real straight skinny." Major Smith was in deadly earnest. "And you'd prefer being with these damned stinking Nips—"

"They don't stink so bad when they're dead," drawled Caldwell. "It's a beautiful stink. I like it. And I think," he said, even more slowly, "that you, sir, would do what Davies is going to do. I think we all would."

The major said, "Hell." He said then, as Tsunum plucked at his arm, "Hell and damnation. We'll get some special ones for you, Davies."

One by one, the Americans gripped Davies' hand. Nothing more was said, no word at all. But when they had gone, back into the jungle, and Davies was again chained to a log where, with Kudzumi dead, he would be only another pariah to the Japanese guards, his throat ached and ached.

To have gone with the others! Davies knew what was intended. Caldwell, the Marine intelligence officer, knew where the Formosan landings were to be made by American forces. So the crashed crew of the reconnaissance ship and the Taiyals, now armed with BAR's, would cross the island and prepare a surprise for the Japanese on the east coast, above the point of amphibious landing.

The Japanese would never come close to

finding these jungle fighters who would be on flank and rear when the Marines stormed ashore. Even a few men, so led, would drive the Japanese wild and play the devil with their defense; and when men were sent against them, the Taiyal-guided Americans would be elsewhere, pouring it on again. The Nipponese would be thoroughly confused, and nothing was worse for them than confusion, doubt, the lack of something they could understand.

They'll go crazy, thought Lew. *Absolutely crazy.*

He eased himself as comfortably as he could against the log. He had to attempt to do something about this comphor-plastic. It was undoubtedly important. And it was better to think about it than about home, or about the tight handclasps of he Americans as they left him here in Formosa.

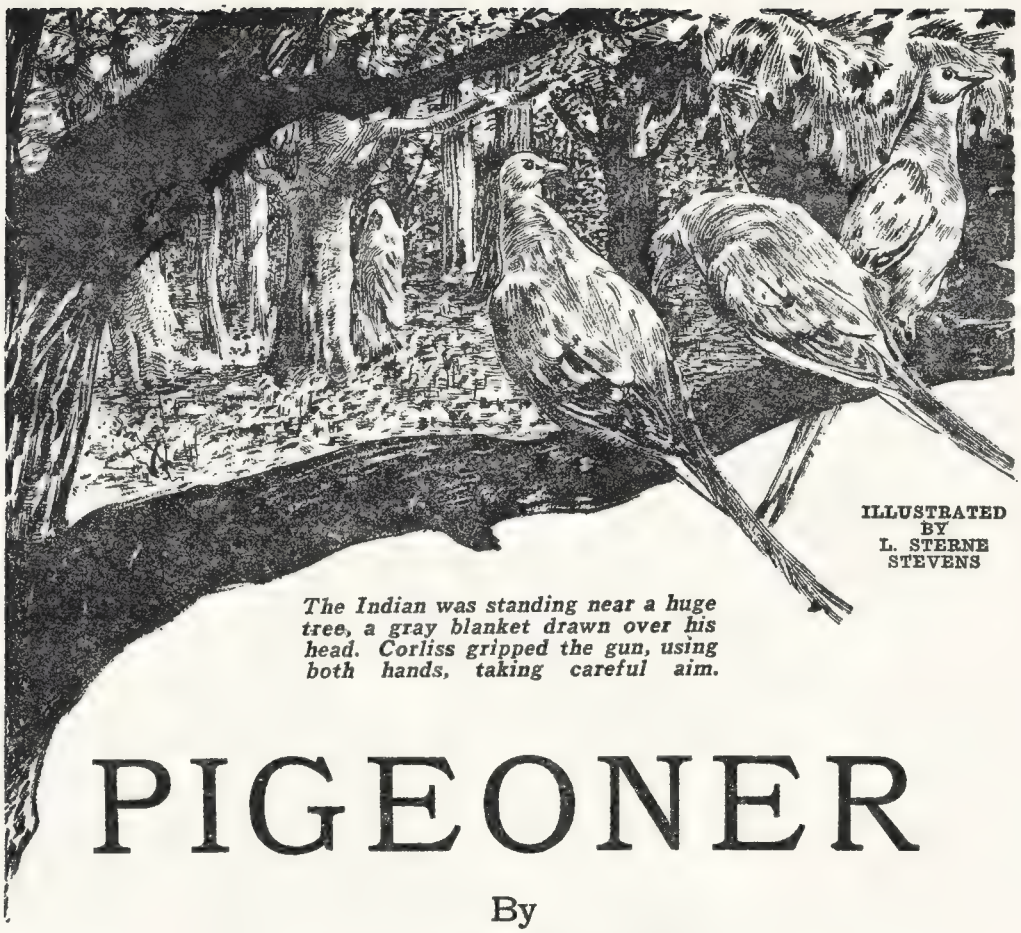
But what he actually thought was this: first there'd be an air attack, fighters and dive-bombers, with smudges of smoke far out at sea, although not from the skulking Japanese Navy. Then those smudges would turn into ships which would hammer and pound at the selected beachheads where the Nips had their caves in the rock between So-o and Dainano, down where the cliffs were six thousand feet high straight to the water, but where rivers formed beaches also . . .

Planes and ships and men. Men!

Chained, Davies, with eyes closed, saw the attack. It could have but one outcome, and that was because of *men.*

Koropok was one of them.

"Hello, K-k-k-katy," said Davies and watched the drunken glaze slowly slip from Kudzumi's eyes.



ILLUSTRATED BY L. STERNE STEVENS

The Indian was standing near a huge tree, a gray blanket drawn over his head. Corliss gripped the gun, using both hands, taking careful aim.

PIGEONER

By

JIM KJELGAARD

CORLISS got off the train at the little wayside station in Pennsylvania's mountains. He went forward to the baggage car, received and shouldered the sack containing his pigeon nets, and turned to look at the town into which he had come. It was like five hundred other towns.

Unpaved roads and streets wound between square boxes of stores and neat little houses. The inevitable team of mules was hitched to a post before one of the stores. A farmer was driving a team of horses out of town, and a lean, hungry looking hound basked in the dust beside the road.

Corliss swung the bag of nets on his back, and turned to come face to face with a Pottowattamie Indian.

Corliss stared, a little startled and a little confused, as he always was whenever anything broke the orderly and expected chain of events. In the west and midwest, Indians were normal. But here—Corliss let his eyes rove from the brave's thatch of jet-black hair down over his khaki shirt and faded blue levis. The Indian stared back, unflinching and unblinking. Corliss groped in his methodical brain for the correct answer to the other's presence, and when nothing was forthcoming he became angry.

"What do you want?"

The Indian made no reply, and Corliss' anger grew.

"Get out of my way, damn you!"

The Indian turned and walked away. Corliss studied his retreating back, and again tried perplexedly to fathom the reason for his presence. But unless he was hunting the pigeons—something few Indians dared try in white man's country—there was no logical reason. Corliss shrugged. He took a firmer grip on his sack of nets, walked from the station platform down the street, and entered a store over which hung a sign painted on a wooden board: *John Palmer—Hardware and Farm Goods.*

Corliss set his pack on the floor and leaned against the counter. He looked out the window, and listened to the rattle and shuffle of boxes behind a partition. There was the sound of footsteps on the floor, and gray-haired John Palmer appeared. Corliss nodded.

"Hi, John."

"Hi, Wayne."

Corliss asked, "Are the birds still here?"

The Pottowottamie stared back, unflinching and unblinking. He made no reply, and Corliss' anger grew.

"Yep. Nesting on Hunter's Creek."

"Big flock?"

"Medium big. About five hundred yards wide and two thousand long.

Corliss nodded thoughtfully. About a million birds. But it was only eleven years ago, on the banks of the Ohio, that he had stood and watched passenger pigeons fly overhead, with never a break in their ranks, for eighteen hours. There had been, he estimated, seven hundred million in that flock and it had been only one of many flocks. Certainly they had gone fast when they started to go. This relatively puny flock of one million was the last, and when they were gone the profession of pigeoner would pass with them. But, with pigeons so scarce, these last birds would bring a very good price on the New York market.

"I saw a Pottowottamie when I got off the train," Corliss said. "What's he doing here?"

"He blew in with the pigeons."

"Is he going to net them?"

"I reckon so."

Corliss frowned. The Indians had always killed the passenger pigeons, as many as they could get. Many villages had several hundred gallons of pigeon oil, which they used as white men used butter. Yet twenty-five years ago, when he had first followed pigeons into Pottowottamie country, the Indians had been openly hostile. They had even forcibly prevented his going into a nesting place and taking the profitable squabs. When he had started netting adult birds they had openly shown their displeasure, and once they had bound him to a lodge pole until all the pigeons had flown away.

That had been twenty-five years ago. Since then, when they found out that they could get paid for them, some of the Pottowottamies had become the best little commercial pigeon-killers you'd care to find. Corliss looked out the window, searching for some sign of the Indian he had seen when he got off the train. But the brave was not in sight. Corliss turned back to John Palmer.

"I'll need twenty bushels of corn and a rig."

Palmer waved his hand. "I got the corn, an' Ansell Higgins'll take you where you want to go. Don't forget my five per cent when you sell."

"I won't."

CORLISS sat beside Ansell Higgins on the springless seat of his farm wagon while the two mules paced sedately down the dirt road. To the left, the road dropped sharply into a valley at the bottom of which a silver stream sparkled. To the right a steep hill slanted upwards. Corliss turned around to look at his nets in their sack, and at the twenty bushels of corn with which John Palmer had loaded the wagon. Everything was as it should

be. Yet, somehow he had the feeling that everything was wrong. But it could not be wrong. There was this one last flock of passenger pigeons, and he should make two cents profit on every one he could get. Six thousand dollars was not too much to expect. Of course, if he waited for the squabs to hatch and then took them, he could make a great deal more. But another pigeoner would surely get wind of this flock before the squabs hatched, and besides there was the Indian. He had better take what he could while he could get it.

Ansell Higgins flicked the rump of the off mule with the ends of the reins, and the team broke into a shuffling little trot. Corliss looked at the sun. It was ten o'clock. Corliss let his gaze rove down the wooded valley. Far down, mere specks against the sky, a flock of birds hovered over the forest trees. Undulating and wavering, the great flock circled a moment and dipped into the trees. Corliss laid a restraining hand on Ansell Higgins' wrist, and the lanky farmer reined his mules to a halt. Corliss squinted into the spring sun while the mules champed restlessly at their bits.

The trees into which the circling pigeons had dipped seemed to move as if a strong wind were passing through them. Their half-formed leaves rippled, and another great wave of birds lifted out of them. Up they rose, and up, flying in such close formation that it was as though each separate bird were part of a great whole that was directed by one brain. They flew down the valley, became a dancing wave of black specks against the blue horizon, and dropped out of sight. Corliss relaxed. The pigeons were nesting. The first flock had been the males, coming back from the feeding grounds to take over the eggs. The second flock had been females rising from their nests to fly out and feed. He would have to spread his bait and throw his nets on the feeding ground. Almost invariably passenger pigeons left the food about their nests for the inexperienced young.

Ansell Higgins broke his two-hour silence with, "I reckon they're down in the beech woods."

"Take me there."

"It'll cost ye an extra dollar."

"Get me there before two o'clock and I'll make it two dollars."

ANSELL HIGGINS flicked his mules into another trot, and the wagon rattled down the rutted road. Fifty or more hawks, following and living on the pigeons, wheeled lazily over the forest. The sun reached its high point, and began its slow roll over the mountain-tops to the west. Ansell Higgins' mules toiled up a long hill, and were driven down a rutted track that led into stately, marching rows of massive beech trees. Corliss looked about. Pigeons were everywhere, digging in the leaves, perched in the trees, flying about. The forest floor, where they had scraped the dry leaves aside to get at the little brown beech nuts that had filtered through them, looked as though a huge and reckless wind had swept across it.

Ansell Higgins said, "Here ye be."

"Wait for me."

Corliss leaped from the wagon, and a dozen pigeons that were feeding nearby took wing and flew ten feet away to new grounds. A little, cold hand paused for one second at the back of Corliss' neck, and an icy breath filtered down his spine. He looked uneasily about, as though expecting to see something here that should not be or something not here that should. But again everything fitted into an exact pattern, one with which he had been familiar for twenty-five years. Still—

He said to Ansell Higgins, "Halter your team. We won't be going back until dark."

"It'll cost ye an extra dollar."

"Halter your team."

Corliss moved through the beech woods, and the feeding pigeons there scarcely bothered to get out of his way. He opened one of the sacks of corn, spread a double handful on the ground, and almost at once saw it covered with as many pigeons as could crowd upon it. Corliss stood silently against a tree six feet away, watching them. They went about their feeding, paying no attention whatever to him as each head dipped to the ground and came up with its single grain of corn. More pigeons came. Then, as one bird, all in the beech woods took wing and flew away.

Corliss emptied a bushel of corn, spreading it over an area that his net would cover. He untied his sack of nets, and stood waiting with one in his hands. He heard the noise of their wings long before he saw the male birds, coming back into the beeches to feed. They dipped from the air into the trees, and for a moment perched on branches or twigs while they talked among themselves. Then they dropped to the ground and started feeding. Corliss stood perfectly still, ready to cast the net in his hands. A pigeon found the spread corn, and chirped happily as he announced the unexpected largess. Instantly another pigeon was beside him, and another. Corliss scarcely breathed as he saw more come in. Then the ground before him was literally covered with feeding pigeons, and he flung his net.

There was a roar like that of a strong, rising wind. A half million pigeons rose on their million wings, and the beech woods emptied. Corliss caught his breath, bending forward as he saw something that, until now, he had not seen. Fifty feet away, the Pottowottamie sat calmly against the bole of a huge beech tree. Corliss darted angrily forward, and the Indian rose and stalked into the forest.

"They went," Ansell Higgins said succinctly.

ON THE train to New York's Beaverkill Valley, Corliss sat moody and sullen, gazing out of the window at the rugged cliffs that rolled by in endless succession and occasionally fingering the gun that he had bought from John Palmer. Nothing, he assured himself for the hundredth time, could have happened as it had happened back there in the Pennsylvania mountains. He had been a pigeon-netter twenty-five years, and never before had every bird escaped after he had baited them within netting distance. He should have caught ninety per cent of those that had decoyed, and taken another net full in the same place twenty minutes later. Corliss squirmed in his seat. Not only had he failed to take so much as one bird, but even the brooding females had flown away that same night.

A frown creased his temple, and deepened as the train rattled on into the Catskills. Something had not been as it should be, he was positive of that much, and whatever it was had to do with that blasted Pottowottamie. In the past twenty-five years he had met nearly every Indian tribe east of Montana. He knew their legends, their lore, and the hocus-pocus they were always throwing about. But the white man able to distinguish between crazy Indian antics and fundamental Indian knowledge hadn't yet been born. Corliss was sure only that the Pottowottamie had some method of controlling the pigeons. But what were his reasons for doing so?

Of course there was another possible answer to the pigeons' sudden flight. This last big flock, undoubtedly, was made up of the remnants of a dozen or more smaller flocks. Nothing had been more harassed or persecuted than the passenger pigeon. No doubt these were wiser than their predecessors, and though they had not yet learned to fear man, they did fear the nets he cast. The next time he caught up with the flock, Corliss decided, he would use a camouflaged net.

Again his hand stole to the gun, resting in a shoulder holster under his arm. It was a good gun, the best John Palmer had in stock. And regardless of the Indian's reason for hunting the pigeons, the next time he and Corliss met in the woods he would learn all the errors involved in meddling with white men's affairs. It would be easy to hide an Indian, especially one who had so obviously cut himself off from his own country and friends. Such men came and went, and nobody bothered their heads very much about them.

Corliss leaned back in his seat. He had waited in the little Pennsylvania town for five days, telephoning Latcher, his New York agent, every day. But it was not until the end of the fifth day that a telegram had come from Latcher definitely locating the flock of pigeons on the Beaverkill. Corliss dozed a little as the train rumbled on. All over the country, wherever pigeons roosted or nested, or wherever they were likely to do either, there were men who knew that they would be well paid if Latcher learned of the flock's whereabouts and the pigeoner who came made a good catch. No flock could hide for long, though it did seem that five days was a long while for this flock to take in getting from Pennsylvania's mountains to the Beaverkill. Maybe they had stopped to feed in some of the inaccessible country in between. They did that sometimes, and other times made non-stop flights of incredible distances, especially when they had been hunted hard.

The train rattled to a halt, and Corliss got off to go forward and claim his sack of nets. For a moment he stood blinking in the warm sunshine that sprayed the station platform, and again seemed to see himself in a place where he stood nearly every day for the past twenty-five years. Nothing that took place in this town could not take place in the little Pennsylvania town he had just left, or the next town into which he might go. A freckled, red-headed boy with two missing front teeth grinned at him from an express wagon.

Corliss asked, "Want to earn a penny, son?"

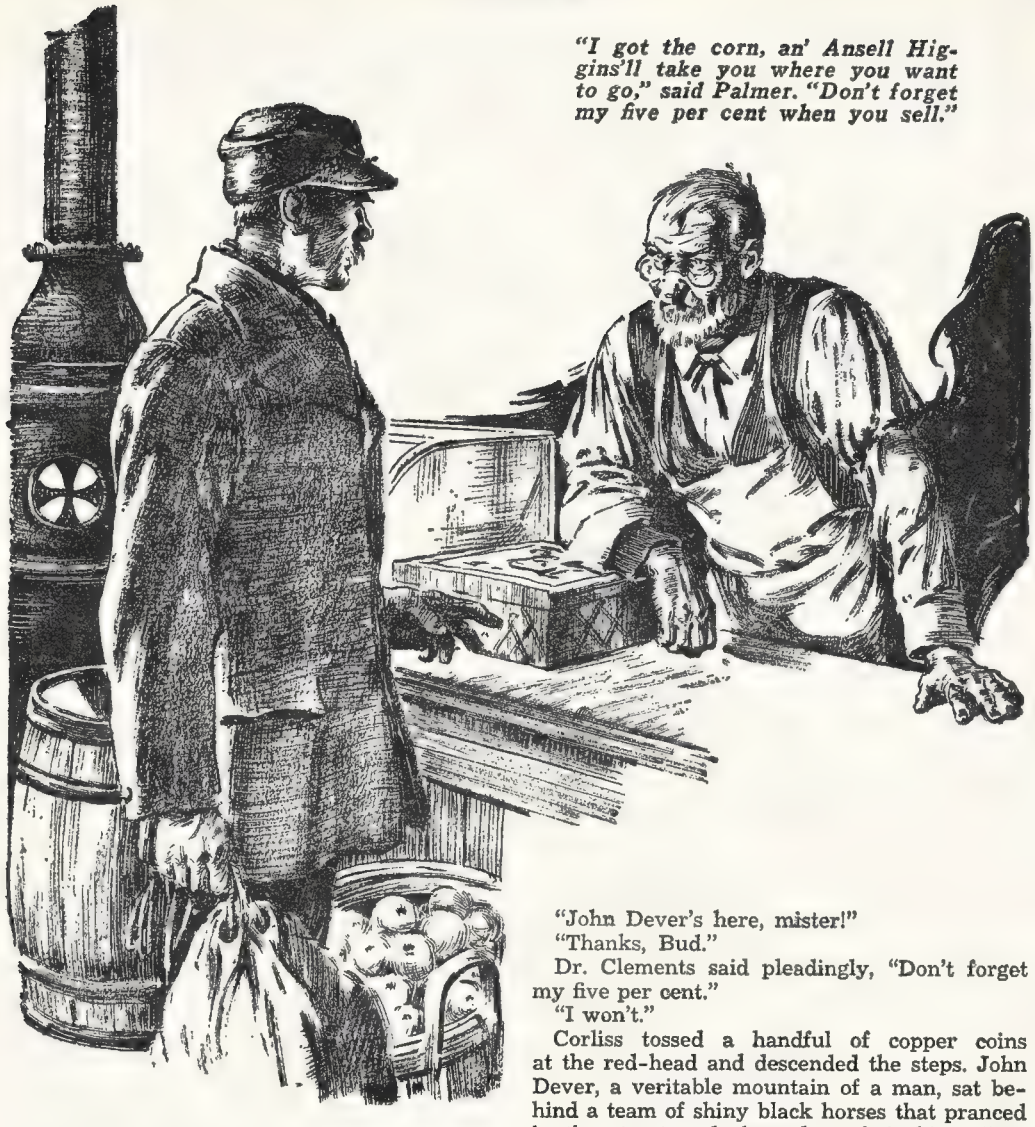
"Sure."

"Carry this sack. It isn't heavy, just looks big."

The boy shouldered the sack of nets, and Corliss cut around the station to walk up the street. Dr. Clements, a dentist, was their man here and Corliss frowned a little as he walked. Wherever possible, it was best to deal with storekeepers; they had a wider acquaintance than anyone else and were more cooperative. Most of them knew that even if no pigeons were taken and they got no five per cent, they could at least sell twenty bushels of corn to any pigeoner. But sometimes you couldn't get storekeepers. The one in this town had raised a loud voice in protest of the way the pigeons were being slaughtered. Probably he would want an exorbitant price for grain. But that couldn't be helped.

They reached the wooden building housing Dr. Clements' office, and Corliss spoke to the boy. "Wait here and keep an eye on the nets, Bud. I won't be long."

HE CLIMBED the steps and opened the door leading to the dentist's waiting room. Dr. Clements, a mouselike little man shrouded from head to foot in a white gown, came from the inner office to greet him. Corliss tried to keep the dislike he felt from showing in his face. Clements was as mousy as he looked. Too unaggressive to make much of a living at dentistry or anything else, he drew the better part of his livelihood from wandering pigeoners. Corliss nodded.



"I got the corn, an' Ansell Higgins'll take you where you want to go," said Palmer. "Don't forget my five per cent when you sell."

"Hi, Doc. The birds still here?"

Dr. Clements bobbed his head. "Yes, they are. John Dever knows exactly where. I've arranged for his wagon and he'll bring twenty bushels of corn for only thirty cents a bushel." He stuck his head out the open window and called shrilly, "Sonny, go tell John Dever to bring his rig and the corn I ordered, will you?" He turned respectfully to Corliss. "Anything else, Mr. Corliss?"

"Is anyone else after the flock?"

"A local man named Winterest said he was going to catch some."

Corliss nodded. He could compete with local pigeoners. There was a hurried pound of footsteps, and the red-head burst into the room.

"John Dever's here, mister!"

"Thanks, Bud."

Dr. Clements said pleadingly, "Don't forget my five per cent."

"I won't."

Corliss tossed a handful of copper coins at the red-head and descended the steps. John Dever, a veritable mountain of a man, sat behind a team of shiny black horses that pranced in the street and chewed at their bits. Corliss swung his sack of nets into the wagon beside the sacks of corn already there, and looked up at John Dever.

"Do you know where the pigeons are?"

"Yup."

"Let's go."

Corliss climbed into the seat, and the team of prancing blacks got under way. They swung off the dirt road onto a track leading into the mountains, and from that into a rutted trail that wound between tall trees. They were a quarter of a mile down the trail when the team of blacks tossed their heads and snorted. Another rig was coming toward them, and when it was close an excited man stood up in the seat and waved his arms.

Corliss stood perfectly still, ready to cast the net. He scarcely breathed as he saw more pigeons come in.

"You might as well go back! You might as well go back! They've gone! Damnedest thing I ever saw! They left their nests, their eggs and everything else, and just flew!"

"Your name Winterest?" Corliss asked.

"Yeah! I'm Winterest! You might as well go back! Damnedest thing I ever saw! I had a hundred dozen pigeons decoyed to bait, and when I went to cast my net every one of 'em flew! Those on the nests went, too! When I looked up, there was a Pottowottamie Indian lookin' at me! He sent them pigeons away!"

All the rest of the day, and far into the night, Corliss drank rum and mixed rum and whiskey at the little wayside inn sported by the Beaverkill village. He had sensed something more than could be seen back in Pennsylvania, and this was definite proof. Indians were lazy, indolent creatures, but they did know more than white men knew about some things.

Corliss took another drink and poured it down while little yellow flecks of anger began to roll across his eyes. He himself had not been a pigeoner for twenty-five years without learning something about pigeons. Pennsylvania, the Beaverkill Valley—he had followed them on that route before. This flock, already frightened from two nesting places, would go a long way to the next one. Unless Corliss was a hundred per cent wrong, their next nesting place would be in the oaks and pines just south of Big Bay, on Lake Michigan's eastern shore. His eyes narrowed. He did not know how the Pottowottamie had managed to drive the pigeons away, but now the Indian's strategy was plain. He could not, and knew that he could not, compete with white men on their own grounds. But Michigan was tribal grounds, and an Indian could operate safely there.

Corliss rose, staggered to the bar and laid three silver dollars on it. He shouldered the sack of nets, stamped down to the station, and sat on the nets staring fixedly down the track. He fingered the gun at his shoulder. There was just one flock of pigeons left and he, Wayne Corliss, was going to have them. This time there would be no slip-ups and no sudden, mysterious flights just as he was about to cast his net. Before he spread a bait or unpacked a net, he was going to settle once and for all with the Indian. The train steamed in, and Corliss let the gun slip back into its holster while he loaded his nets on the baggage car and climbed soddenly aboard.

He slept, but when he awakened his hand was on the gun. The Indian could go west only by train, and he might be on this one. A dozen times Corliss stamped through the three cars, and at the first stop got out to look under them. But save for a bedraggled hobo beating his way west, there was no one there. Corliss returned to his seat. The Indian was not on this train. Probably he had taken one of those that had pulled out ahead of it.

THREE days later, on a ramshackle narrow-guage railroad, Corliss arrived at the town he had sought. It was a little wilder, a little newer than those in the east. But, even including the sleepy hound that basked in front of a store, it was the same town. Corliss looked, and drew over his eyes shades of weariness that excluded the town and everything in it. For twenty-five years he had lived like this, hopping about from place to place, always hunting the pigeon hordes.

But not any more, never any more. When he had taken this last flock of pigeons, his long toil would be over. The six thousand dollars

he would earn, added to what he had, would give him enough to live on for the rest of his days. But first there was another job.

Corliss carried his sack of nets up to the grilled ticket window of the little station, and dropped the sack beside it. A peal of thunder rumbled through the sky, and the wind that blew in from the lake whipped about him. A lanky, transplanted New Englander, with thick glasses over his watery eyes, squinted at him.

"Peejener?"

"Yes. I'm leaving these nets here. I'll pick them up."

"There ain't," the lanky man stated, "been a flock of peejens through here in two years."

Corliss left the station, feeling the heavy, good weight of the gun under his arm as he walked. A little uneasiness rose to trouble him. If he had guessed wrong— But he hadn't. He had followed the pigeons too long and knew too much about them to guess wrong. The pigeons would be here, and the Indian would be with them.

Lightning flashed across the gray sky, and another peal of thunder followed it. Corliss quickened his step, and even before he entered the heavy forest that bordered the shores of Lake Michigan, he knew that he had guessed right. Out of the oaks came strange noises, a ringing of myriad bells mingled with the threatening growl of the coming storm. The pigeons were in, going about the serious work of building their nests. Corliss entered the oak forest, and slipped behind a tree.

There was a sudden, startling silence as the thunder and lightning, their preparatory work done, retreated back to the spaces from which they had come. The pigeons ceased their belling and perched tensely in the trees while they waited for the rain. A cold, almost twilight, blackness filtered through the oaks. Corliss oak forest, and slipped behind a tree.
along, while the silent pigeons watched. He came to a big oak, peered around it and saw the Pottowottamie.

The Indian was standing near a huge tree, a gray blanket drawn over his black head, waiting as if for a signal. With his right hand Corliss eased the gun from its holster, and slid it forward. He drew the hammer back and gripped the gun with both hands while he took careful aim. He squeezed the trigger. The blast of the gun whipped like a live thing through the stillness, and a thousand sleeping echoes awakened angrily to fling back the noise. Corliss gasped and felt the sudden, painful thing that licked at his back. A numbing shock crept through him, and the gun dropped from his hand. He looked again at the Indian, and saw a stump covered with a gray blanket. A great uproar filled his ears, and through failing consciousness he tried to discern its source.

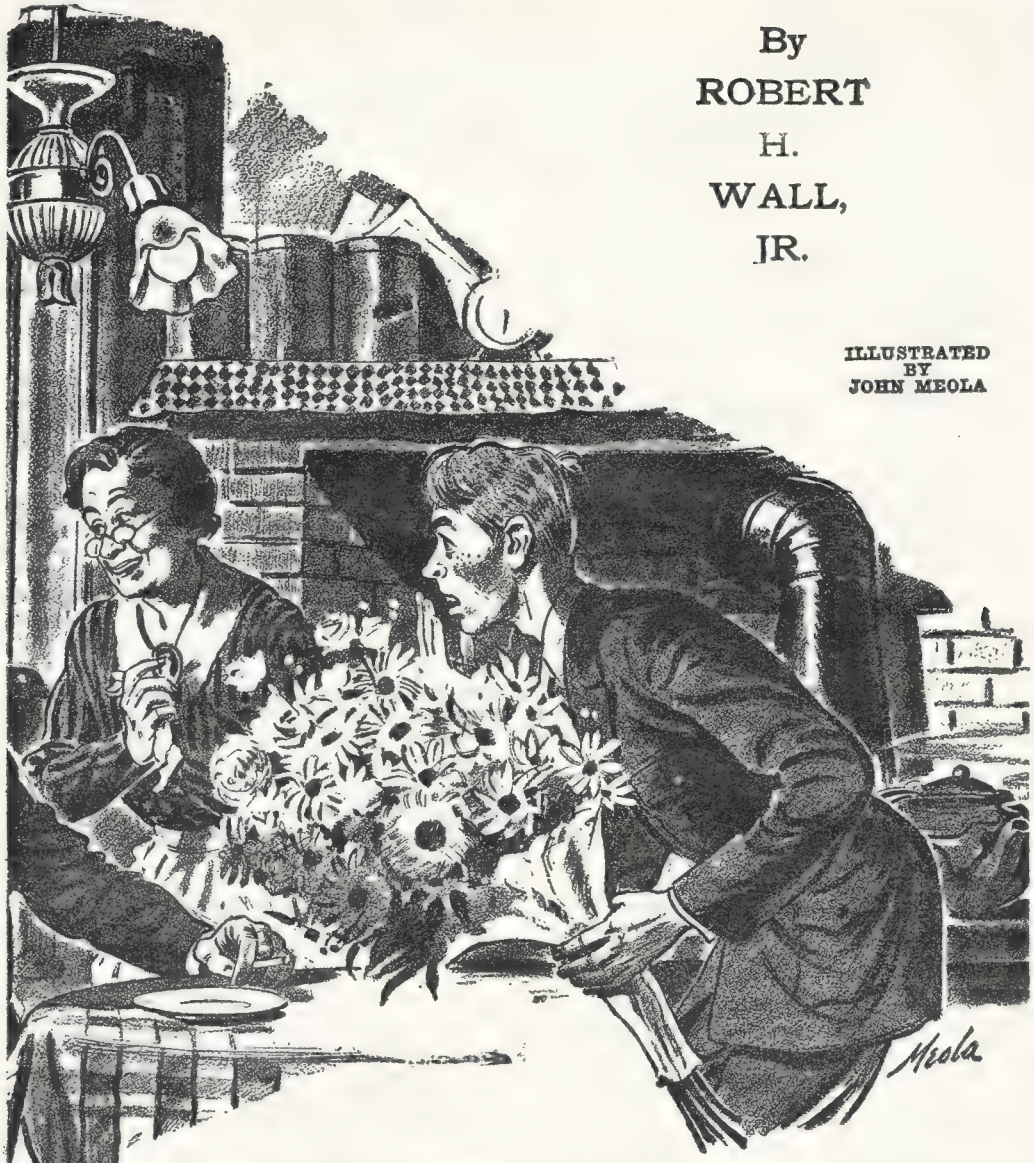
His hand crept slowly to the small of his back, and felt the knife that was buried to its hilt there. His lips twisted in a painful grimace. Decoy, decoy. The Indian had baited more than pigeons this time. Then, in one of his last moments of clarity, Corliss defined the uproar that filled his ears. It was the beat of countless wings, mingled with the noises of the storm. The pigeons were flying again, rising high above the oaks into the torrents of rain and bucking the gale that came with it. Corliss watched as they flew across the open lake.

Even as he watched, he saw the last lines of birds beaten down into the water and engulfed by the white mountains of waves that the wind had kicked up there.

GET OFF MY BACK

By
ROBERT
H.
WALL,
JR.

ILLUSTRATED
BY
JOHN MEOLA



I guess at first she must have thought we were a couple of light-hearted villagers gathered there in the kitchen to drain a cup of tea.

NOTHING happens to me. And yet, everything does. If you get the fine distinction. To illustrate, there's this thing I get involved in with Stinky because of a little brown book. There's nothing particularly dangerous about that book. I get one. Stinky gets one. So does the whole outfit, three days before we dock in Australia. Now, this troublemaker is GI. They give it to us to acquaint us with the people and customs Down Under. It says so right in the front. It dishes out a quick picture of what's going to be your home for a while and tells you a lot of facts about wallabies, kangaroos, and Aussie money.

All right, you say, that sounds very fine and dandy. What's the trouble with that?

I see what you mean, but here's the thing.

It's women. Something about them makes it hard to put all their essential features down like you can a kangaroo. You know what I mean if you're over six years old and are going to school regularly. So the book leaves them out. But to be strictly fair about it, I should tell you that the book will never be written that could straighten Stinky out on the subject of women, Aussie or otherwise.

We're a bunch of guys ranging in age from bib-slobberers to a few old crocks of thirty-odd, like me. It's an army, all right. But sometimes you get to feeling like a volunteer worker in a day nursery, and, for a guy whose maternal instincts would earn him a long, cold glare from any P. T. A., that isn't entirely a pleasure.

Well, to get this show on the road. All men talk about women, especially when there aren't any around, and on the transport coming over we are in an especially good spot for such conversation. We sit out on the deck after dark and shoot the breeze to keep from going below and suffocating slowly. If everything goes according to schedule, just as the moon slides up to take a look at itself in the Coral Sea, the babes become our exclusive topic.

Then, after maybe an hour of that sort of thing, the Polack gets up, steps on my leg in the dark and says, "That's a crock of hot air. Aussies, Americans, they're all the same. Take you for a ride. I ain't kiddin'."

And Stinky brags, "Not me. I'm the exception. No dame is going to fix my wagon unless I want it fixed."

That, you might say, is a major prophecy. Because we haven't been on the continent very long before Stinky comes into the barracks one night about an hour after lights-out and gropes his way to my cot. He sits himself down on the same leg that the Polack has stepped on all the way across the Pacific.

"Did I ever meet a babe! And quit hollering. You want to wake everybody up?" he asks.

"Give the punk a Section 8 and leave me sleep," the Polack growls from the next cot.

"Who's consulting you?" Stinky gets very elegant and wants to know.

"You're beating your gums loud enough to make it a public meeting," the Polack tells him. "And I ain't knocked nobody down since the first sergeant in the States got mad because I filled his whistle with ink."

"Look," I manage to say, "do I get a bronze star if you two fight, or is this just another night problem?"

"Take it up with MacArthur," Stinky suggests.

"Wait a minute," I go on. "I'm just a poor guy who's pulled guard duty last night and maybe latrine duty in the morning on account I was naughty to the first sergeant. I ain't had the strength to look at the poop sheet—"

"Blow it out in your barracks bag," is the anonymous advice I get.

"All right, but I see the chaplain first thing in the morning after I get through with the latrine."

Stinky then gets up off my leg and cot and moves out where he can kick over a butt can or two in the dark. "It's like this, fellows. I'm over in King's Cross seeking cold beer." Everybody moans. "I go into a few places and then—then I encounter this miracle."

"Cold beer?" The whole barracks is in uproar. "Are you kidding? Where?"

"Beer?" Stinky asks in a tortured voice. "It doesn't come that way Down Under. This I am telling you is something really special." He's playing to a cold house by then. "Jessie Mae!" he breathes.

I'm the fall guy who keeps the dialogue moving. "Who or what is Jessie Mae, if I may be so vulgar as to inquire?"

"Jessie Mae happens to be what is known Down Under as a 'Sheila'," Stinky explains.

"A tomato," I groan. You wake us up to tell us you've picked up a tomato!"

Stinky gets down off the podium and comes over to concentrate on me in a hurt voice. "Listen! Jessie Mae is no tomato."

Somebody says something about cans.

"Jessie Mae is a very cute person and she comes from a strictly classy Aussie family which I shall make a point of meeting when the proper time comes. And so I'll wish you all good night."

WITH most guys that would have been all. But I knew that, if Stinky lived up to his usual standards, I was in for a long pull with him on my back. On account of this Stinky is the kind of lad who plays the cobber deal up to the hilt and can't ever make his mind up without he backs you or somebody up against the wall, clutches at your pocket flaps and whispers tensely, "Here's the deal. What should I do?" Then he completes the routine by arguing with you and telling you why he's not going to take your advice. So, I struggle back to sleep with little mice of apprehension nibbling at me like I'm cheese, and no cats around.

For the next two days I don't see much of Stinky and I know he's giving me the hurt-friend business. Besides, I come down with a mess of details including a couple of clean-up jobs that would have given Hercules a cold sweat and spots before the eyes. By the time my name has stopped being a bottleneck on the duty roster, I am set for a night off the post. So, after chow, I sign out at the orderly room, pat little Joe, the assistant charge of quarters, on his head and go down toward the railroad station.

I've kind of forgotten Stinky. As I say, he hadn't been getting around. Work and Stinky never mix well. So there I am, counting cadence for myself and working up to a spirited rendition of *Waltzing Matilda,* when Stinky uncoils out of nowhere and starts climbing on my back again.

"I'm certainly glad of this encounter," proclaims the New Jersey prose burner, "because it affords me the opportunity of acquainting you with Jessie Mae."

"I was planning to go to the library and study first aid, so some other time."

"You wouldn't wish to offend me, would you?"

"And after that I was counting on going to the art gallery to look at the etchings and things they got."

"Besides Jessie Mae has heard all about you and is eager to make your acquaintance."

"I'd just be in the way," I protest. All the time I know I'm a dead duck.

"Nonsense. Jessie Mae is a person of rare intellect and is always interested in conversation.

I am on the point of telling Stinky then and there that no dame is going to run all over my mind in spiked shoes and have herself a track meet unless she is my dame, and that I'll leave them to swoon jointly over Jessie Mae's intellect while I look me up some beer at some place where the intellectual conversation consists of me saying, "Draw me another," to the barmaid every once in a while.

But an hour later finds me having my hand squeezed by this Sheila, Jessie Mae, who's not without her dinkum features except for her teeth which she has some troube keeping her lips tucked over. Especially the upper ones.

"I'm ever so pleased to meet any friend of Jerome's," she's telling me.

Jerome is Stinky, of course, the way he appears on the company roster.

Stinky is smiling at Jessie Mae. "I've been telling him about you, too. Only he's too shy to talk much at first."

I grunt in a friendly fashion. "Yeah, but just get me warmed up and I'll talk a leg off you."

"You don't look like the shy type to me," says this Jessie Mae, turning eyes like searchlights on me. "Not a bit of it. I'll just wager that you aren't, either."

"I'm married," I inform her courteously.

She turns the beam on Stinky. "Jerome, you never told me he was married."

"Let's go somewhere for a sandwich or something," Stinky suggests. "I forgot, that's all."

"I know a place where they have real lovely steaks," Jessie Mae fairly drools. "Let's be off." I'm forgotten in the rush to the chow line, which, with Jessie Mae, resembles a fast conga to the flashiest-looking chophouse on the main drag.

As time passes by I can see that she's as great a one for ear-beating as Stinky, and also has a high taste for eats. She finishes her second steak and sets up a shrill cry for a "sweet." I am wondering does she work this joint on a percentage racket when she gives me some more of her attention. "What do you think of Australian girls?"

"I only read the little brown book, miss, and besides I've got three little girls at home besides my wife that keeps my thoughts pretty much on one level," I tell her.

"But you aren't answering my question," she insists.

"He's only got one little girl," Stinky corrects me, as if that makes any difference in my meaning.

"Well," I say, getting up, "I'll run along and let you young people enjoy yourselves. I have to meet some folks and it has been a pleasure."

Jessie Mae's "sweet" arrives—it turns out to be a garble of ice cream, little cakes, and a sauce of some kind—in time to reduce her protests to a minimum. "A real treat," she mumbles, and I'm left to decide whether she's referring to my leaving, meeting me, or the plateful of frozen indigestion she's pushing happily around with her spoon.

"There's a few things I want to confer with you about," Stinky whispers to me as I leave. I nod and make for the door so I can get out before he remembers I'm on the check he's going to have to pay. After all, friendship has got some limits.

HE catches me next day outside the PX. "Well?" he asks.

"Nice day, all right."

"You are aware of my meaning. Jessie Mae."

"Oh, Jessie Mae."

"Sometimes I doubt your intelligence," he states.

"Brother, you took the very words right out of my mouth. Tell me, Jerome, what goes with this Jessie Mae you've taken to feeding? Is that bit of Aussie fauna getting herself set for a dependency allotment?"

"Fauna?"

"Now you're doing it."

"I need advice."

"Oh, no, Jerome. I couldn't. The colonel wants to see me, and I've got to bring my mind all clear and sharp to him to cope with his problems."

"You're the only one who can help me."

"Have you tried the Red Cross? They're good at it."

"Really, cobber," Stinky protests. He's working that cobber thing to death on account of it's so Aussie and all. "Really, cobber, this is no time for horsing around. I'm in a dilemma."

"I wonder how Mr. Anthony is doing these days?"

"Do you think Jessie Mae would understand if . . . " He fumbles open the long box he's fished out of his jacket pocket and shows me a glittering wristwatch all stretched out on a blue velvet bed inside.

I swallow a few times. "No. I think she'd understand. She impressed me as being a very understanding girl. It *is* for telling time, isn't it?"

"I don't want her to think—"

"Satisfy my curiosity on one point, mate," I request. "Does Jessie Mae always eat like that, or was last night some special Aussie holiday? After all, a man who's contemplating a serious step like slapping a wristwatch you could practically find in the dark on a babe's wrist, had ought to consider such things."

Stinky ignored the undercurrents. "Here's a refined sort of girl whose only chance to obtain the beautiful things in life has come from her association with me. Sort of clutching at life as it passes by, you know."

"On the merry-go-rounds back where I come from, you only get a brass ring good for a free ride." I jerk my head at the watch. "I'd say the kid's made a pretty first-rate clutch for the first time around."

"That's a very mercenary notion. And I must say that it don't do you justice."

"My motives are not in question," I remind him. "We were discussing Jessie Mae at your own request. So, if you don't like the answers, kindly get off my back, Junior."

"I don't like your inferences."

I shrug. "Well, that's settled."

But Stinky is trying to climb back on. "Time was when I knew to whom I could turn for true, friendly advice."

"That," I tell him, "was a near-miss. Who asked me what I thought? And who always puts up a beef when I tell him what I think? You tire me, chum."

Stinky gives me an incendiary glance and walks off.

For a long time after that I don't see much of him. And you know how it is, if you've ever had a broken arm or leg, when they take off the cast. You've been living with it for so long that you miss it. Well, that's how it was with me. I finally boiled it down to the point where I figured that it didn't make any difference to me if Jessie Mae got Stinky all involved in personal lend-lease. He was still a good guy in spite of her and the blank verse he sometimes talked. So I looked him up in the PX and bought him some near beer to patch things up.

He is stiff and formal at first, but I brush that aside. "Say, I'm sorry about everything I said."

"That's all right. Think nothing of it. You should of seen her expression when I made the presentation."

"All sparkling eyes, huh?"

"I'll say. And wait until she sees the ring. But I'm not springing that on her until I get it paid for."

All I say is, "I see what you mean."

Then a few days later, old Sister Fate, dressed up to look like GHQ, steps in and I have reason to hope that Stinky will be saved. We are suddenly alerted for shipment and that means no passes, telephone calls or letters.

AFTER the usual hurry-up-and-wait routine, we're sitting on hatches and things again, sailing north, and reading another little brown book entitled, *New Guinea*. In the back part of this one are a lot of things to ask the natives like, "House-drink, ee stop where?" Which, it says, means, "Where is the hotel?"

"If it's got hotels," the Polack points out, "it can't be too bad. And maybe they don't boil their beer and serve it hot."

There weren't any natives around when we landed and pitched our pup tents in the rain. There still weren't any natives during the next few days. Maybe they were hiding in the jungle, watching us nick away at the edges of it with machetes in the same rain. That jungle is something. You whack at it all day. You get up in the morning and a new jungle has grown up overnight. But it isn't too long, in light-years, before we have our tent city set up and have even gone so far as to make fancy with fences and signs telling you where the latrine is. Over the supply tent the Polack has put a sign that reads, "Eager Beaver Construction Co." I'm just a clerk, a pencil pusher, but brother, I was right in there digging pits, filling them up the next day and starting in again a few feet away. I build so many bridges and pitch so many tents that I'm going to be one son-of-a-gun of a scoutmaster when I get home, if I recover the use of my mother tongue and get over the careless habit of garnishing sentences with four-letter words.

Stinky and I are on the best of terms. He is mostly driving trucks during this period, so he could afford to wear a jolly smile. I even have myself under control enough to listen to Jessie Mae's letters without goofing off and putting a kink in his dignity. It seems to me that they are pretty controlled for a girl who is all agog over someone, but I figure that might be because she has such a big intellect. And I wasn't bothering too much because I figured distance and time would take care of her.

The only break I make is one night at the movies. We are standing up to rest while they are changing reels in the projection house. You sit on coconut-palm logs laid flat on the ground and there aren't any loges.

"Today," Stinky confides, "I mailed Jessie

Mae a money order for twenty-five pounds."

"You *what?*"

"She can save it, for us. I told her I'd send more next payday. You see, I can't very well make a regular allotment. It would look kind of funny, don't you think? Just having 'Friend' where you show relationship on the application?"

"Why don't you buy a nice lot here in New Guinea, if your money is being a burden to you? I have in mind a nice ocean view site with rich oil deposits and a small barbecue pit already installed and I can take a down-payment right now and give you a receipt tomorrow. Or maybe mining stock—"

"I would be interested in knowing what your objection to Jessie Mae is," Stinky says in a quiet, angry voice. "After all, you're married."

"My domestic bliss doesn't constitute a blanket endorsement of every hay bag I run into."

"Your reaction to the mere mention of her name is practically psychopathic."

"Put it this way, Stinky. I think Jessie Mae is giving you the business. In fact, she's practically opened an office off the proceeds to date, already. So let's not have any more of this elementary psychology chatter and loose talk about my complexes."

The discussion is ended by a sudden downpour of rain and a general struggle to get into our ponchos and see what's happening on the screen through a solid sheet of water, in spite of the fact that we've almost all seen the picture four years ago in the States and could practically recite the dialogue from memory.

Life goes on serenely after that. Stinky seems to hold no grudge, but bats around with a secret smile playing on his lips for months at a time. I don't hear any more selections from his mail, but I know it's considerable because his name is mentioned constantly at mail call. Then the first furlough list is posted outside the orderly room, and Stinky and I represent our outfit's quota. It turns out that Stinky has been sending so many money orders that he has to borrow from the Red Cross to make the boat. And, what's more, I hear from the underground that he's told everybody that this is it, and he's going to pick up that ring in Australia and marry Jessie Mae on his furlough. It creates quite a sensation.

The big day comes and we have our papers stamped at the dock and I'm panting up the gangplank right behind Stinky when he turns around, stops, and says, "Remind me to ask you a very great favor."

I nod and prod him on because the guys behind me are beginning to make pointed suggestions as to which parts of us they are going to give to the sharks first.

On deck that night he tells me he wants me to be best man and that he is going to surprise Jessie Mae on account of he didn't have time to let her know that he's getting this furlough.

"She's expecting the march down the aisle, needless to say?" I ask.

"I think she must be pretty well aware of my intentions. After all, you don't go around giving girls watches and sending them money, just as you said yourself, unless you have intentions."

I try it from a different angle, after thinking awhile. "It occurs to me that there might be some little formality you have overlooked in your bridal panic, like getting the C. O. to approve same."

★ ★ ★

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STAR WESTERN

ALL STORIES NEW ALL STORIES COMPLETE

He has me there, too. "That's very thoughtful of you, but that formality was consummated before we left New Guinea."

"Oh," I say, trying to keep it from sounding like a groan.

STINKY doesn't even call Jessie Mae up from the station he's so set on surprising her. Besides, her people don't have a phone. So we pick up the ring and start the wedding march to Jessie Mae's house. When we get there I even have to press the bell-button for him, he's that nervous.

"Oh, gosh!" he cries, just as my finger is leaving the button. "I got to get some flowers. You go in and visit with Jessie Mae or something. I'll be right back."

I'm not fast enough in taking off after him down the stairs. The door opens and there's a nice, middle-aged lady standing there wiping her hands with her apron, and smiling at me.

That gets me. "My mom does that too. Wipes her hands just like that on her apron, I mean."

"You're a Yank, aren't you?"

"Yes, ma'am. I came here with Stinky. He'll be right back."

"Stinky?"

"I mean Jerome—Jerome Mendel. He's a friend of Jessie Mae's. I mean, we both are."

"Why, of course. Won't you come in and wait for Mr. Mendel? I'm working in the kitchen if you don't mind. I guess you've sat in many a kitchen at home, haven't you?"

"That I have. But I don't want to be in the way or anything so I guess. . . . "

"Of course you won't. We'll have tea while we're waiting."

I guess she hasn't been talking to anybody for a long while. She beats my ears off and I like it. It reminds me of home, and you can take a lot of talk when it makes you feel that way.

When Stinky finally comes back, he is carrying what looks like a tree he's swiped from the park in full bloom. "For Jessie Mae," he explains.

"That's a lovely thought," her mother says. "I'm expecting them back any minute now. Isn't this a coincidence?"

Stinky blushes. "I brought the flowers for —for the wedding." He's a great little item for beating around the bush. I recognize that statement as his way of saying, "Madame, I would like your consent to marry your daughter." But nobody else would. My interpretations of Stinky's involved remarks are cut short sharply.

"Gracious! Jessica will be that pleased! What a pity you both missed the wedding."

Stinky has his mouth open, too, but he recovers first and makes a smile. "Jessie Mae's sister Eunice got married?"

"Eunice? Dear me, no. Her young man's ever so far away—in Italy."

While Stinky and I are letting this seep into our minds, we hear the front door slam and a familiar voice calls, "Where are you, Moms?"

"It's them, now." Moms goes into the hand-wiping routine again.

Stinky is standing up. I stand up, too. Jessie Mae bounces into the kitchen. "Hello," she says as she passes us. She takes one step toward her mother and gives out a double-take that is straight out of Hollywood. I guess at first she must have thought we were a couple of light-hearted villagers gathered in the kitchen to drain a cup of tea. Everybody is staring at everybody else, except her mother and this tall Australian sergeant, who are hugging each other and keeping up the merry tone.

Jessie Mae has the watch on. I case it right off the bat. My eyes go farther and take in the wedding ring she's wearing. Right about then I wish Stinky and I are in the wettest foxhole in New Guinea.

I am trying to think of something to break up the situation, but I'm not doing so good. Jessie Mae doesn't seem likely to have read any good books lately, under the circumstances.

"Why, Jerome," she suddenly blurts. "How very nice of you and—er—to come and see me."

"Looks like we dropped in just in time," Stinky says quietly.

Jessie Mae looks like a shock case. I quickly review first aid treatment in my own mind. Is it head lower than feet or vice versa?

"These are friends of Jessica's, George," her mother explains to the tall Aussie. "Americans."

"Yanks, eh?" George puts in brightly, indulging in a general wringing of hands.

"Jessica's husband," her mother completes the introduction.

George grins and uses up some of that strength to give Jessica Mae the makings of a half-nelson.

"Now we can all have tea together," Jessie Mae's mother says. "And you just wait until you see the beautiful flowers the young gentleman brought. Daisies and I don't know what all."

"We can't stay," Stinky tells her. "We've got to get moving."

Jessie Mae's blood obviously begins to circulate again. She's coming around.

I FOLLOW Stinky to the door saying things about how we have a pressing engagement downtown. They all protest, politely, but let us go without any violence.

I guess it's George who gives me the idea when he says, just before he closes the door behind us, "Come again, lads."

"It's head lower than the feet," I murmur on the way down the street. "On account of then the blood goes back to the head quicker."

Naturally, Stinky doesn't answer. I'm really not talking to him. But I am a minute later, at the corner where we catch the tram. "Just a minute. I forgot something back at the house. Stay right here and I'll only be a minute."

I look back once or twice and he's still standing there. When I come out about fifteen minutes later he's in the same place, but there's this babe standing talking to him like she's chewing gum. That's how fast her jaws are wagging. And very tasty, too.

"This is Bernice Andrews," Stinky says as I come up puffing.

"Hello," Bernice yawps, in a voice loud enough to shatter vases. "I was just telling your friend here how I think it's a shame about Jessie Mae and all. Getting married to George and all."

"Yeah," I agree. "Yeah. So now him and me are going to drink some beer quick like and find the next boat back to New Guinea."

"Wait a minute, old man," Stinky is saying. And I see he's smiling, with my own eyes. "I just invited Bernice to join us."

"I know where there's the best steak in town, too," Bernice tells me. "I could eat a kangaroo."

"That," I admit, as they each grab one of my arms and we run for the tram, "I have never seen."

It's not until we're on our way back to New Guinea that I finally fish the wristwatch out of my pocket and hand it to Stinky. "This much I salvaged."

"Where did you get that?"

"George said to come again, so I did. Jessie Mae and I had a private conference while you were waiting on the corner. She decided she's had the loan of the watch long enough. The money you invested was sort of spent. It seems George was pretty low on cash—"

"You're a real cobber," Stinky declares. "A real, dinkum cobber."

"You're bloody well right, Stinky. And you've still got that wedding ring too, haven't you?"

We lean on the rail and watch the flying fish.

I am quietly thinking about what this experience will be worth to Stinky. I'm feeling mighty mellow. This should take Stinky off my back for the duration and six months.

"I wonder if you'd mind giving me a little advice?" Stinky asks me.

I don't remember saying anything.

"About this Bernice, now . . . . " Then I guess he sees my face, because that's as far as he gets.

We lean on the rail some more, and I think I hear Stinky sigh. It's like slipping off a full field pack after a long march, the way I feel.

FLORIDA'S FLAMING

By JACK MURRAY

His stomach slashed open by Parker's knife, Waters staggered backward and three times his .44 belched flaming lead.

THE house where the "frolic" was being held stood in a clearing near the creek, surrounded by a dense growth of scrub oaks and palmettoes. The home of Tom Mercer was larger than most in that remote section of the Florida cattle country, and in front of it stood two chinaberry trees. The floor of the front parlor had been cleared for dancing. It was there that the fiddles sang and the high-topped boots of the cowmen shuffled to the ancient hoe-down and jig of the hammocks, which had never known a round dance. It was there that swaggering escorts swung the gay, calico-clad backwoods girls "right and left" to the nasal chant of the caller.

In the plain, austere bedroom across the hall from the parlor Jensie Lanier, née Brandon, sat on the high four-poster bed fanning languidly as she coyly repulsed the advances of Bill Parker, who rode the Lazy 20 range for the Towles brothers. Although Jensie had married Tom Lanier—an improvident, shiftless fisher-

SIX-GUNS

A Fact Story

ILLUSTRATED BY
NICK EGGENHOFER

man, who has no part in this story—she was not disposed to allow her marriage vows to interfere with her pleasure, and despite the bad blood between the Brandons and the Towles, the inconstant sister of the former dispensed her favors impartially between the riders of the two rival outfits.

Parker looked up with a frown of annoyance as Dixon Waters, Perry storekeeper, came through the open door and, with a casual nod to the Towles rider, stood looking down with a quizzical smile at the girl sitting on the bed.

"Hi-ya, Jensie," he said. "Where'd you get the fan?"

"Bill give it to me. Like it?"

"Shore." Waters took the fan from the girl's unresisting fingers and began to fan himself slowly. "Shore, hit's pretty." Then, tossing the fan contemptuously back to its owner, he passed on into the hall.

Parker's arm again encircled Jensie's ample waist and he drew her closer. "How 'bout a

kiss, honey?" he asked. "Come on," he urged, "ain't you goin' to be nice to me tonight?"

"No—no, Bill, quit. Not here." She pushed him back.

"Why not?" Parker's low voice was hoarse and insistent as he attempted to push the girl back on the bed.

"No! Where do you think you are, Bill Parker? Yo're half drunk!" As she fought to extricate herself from Parker's embrace the fan slipped out of her hand and fell behind the bed unheeded. "Turn me a-loose, Bill," she panted. Flushed with her efforts she squirmed from the rider's grasp and began to rearrange her ebon hair.

"Where's yore fan, honey?" Parker asked after a minute or two.

Jensie looked around over the rumpled bed. "Why, I guess Dixon kept it."

"The hell he did! I'll see 'bout that," Parker replied as he strode into the front room in search of Waters. Not finding him there among the dancers, he passed on out into the tight-trodden yard where a jug of cane liquor passed from hand to hand. Waters lounged near the edge of the group.

"Dix," Parker asked angrily, "where's that fan—Jensie's fan?"

"Why, Bill, I tossed hit back in her lap. I hain't got hit."

"Yo're a damned liar, Dix. You have!"

"Bill," Waters pronounced ominously, "I don't quarrel at other folkses' houses, an' I don't want any trouble with you here at Tom's. But"— he paused impressively— "tomorrow's Sat'dy an' you'll be in town, an' all yore friends'll be there. Tomorrow, yo're a-goin' to apologize for callin' me a liar." With these words Waters turned his back and walked slowly toward the house.

"O.K., Dix," Parker growled as he fingered the gun which protruded from the waistband of his trousers. "O.K., if that's the way you want hit. I'll be there."

And with this seemingly unimportant altercation, the events were set in motion which precipitated the bloodiest range war of Florida's turbulent cattle frontier.

Saturday morning broke cool and fair in Perry, the little Taylor County cow town nestling near the rim of the hammock which stretched back toward vast acres of virgin cypress and hardwood timber that had already attained a vigorous growth when Christ was crucified. In their vast, somber recesses, with the sunlight filtering through their branches fifty feet or more above, one hears no sound save the tremendous diapason of the stillness of the ages; here, more forcibly than elsewhere in the entire Peninsula, one is reminded of the littleness of man and the glory of his Creator. But on this historic Saturday morning there was to be little to remind one of the divinity of the Almighty.

SOON after the turn of the century the Brandon brothers—Tom, Walter and Marion—had established the Three Links spread, which extended west to the waters of Dead Man's Bay, early rendezvous of Blackbeard the Pirate. The Towles of the Lazy 20—Jim, Bill and Dan—had acquired the territory in the vicinity of San Pedro Bay and their holdings comprised many thousands of acres. It was the boast of Jim Towles, leader of the clan, that he could ride from the Madison County line to the Big Water (the Mexican Gulf), east of the Fenholloway River, and claim every cow track he saw. The Brandon outfit was equally as powerful on the west of the Fenholloway, and each had warned the other to keep his stock on his own side of the river.

By 1907 these two brands were running thousands of head of prime beef cattle and each had from seventy-five to a hundred riders on their payroll, many of them gunmen imported from Oklahoma, South Dakota and other western states. Perry, county seat of Taylor County, was then the center of the industry and had several miles of loading pens. While there was a duly appointed sheriff and chief deputy in the respective persons of Jud Head and Evan "Bunk" Rhodes, the law of the six-gun ruled the cow country much as it did in the earlier days of the Old West. In fact, the Florida range was but a smaller replica of the wide open spaces with everything but the lariat. Instead of the lasso or rope, the Florida cowboy is an expert in the use of the long-lashed stock whip of the *vaquero* of the Argentine.

There had long been ill feeling between the Towles and the Brandons, and Tom Brandon had warned Jim Towles to keep away from his sister, Jensie. Jim refused to heed the warning and Tom swore to kill him. There ensued a long period of rustling and misbranding of mavericks by both outfits, which resulted in numerous gun fights in which many men were killed. Then, in a spirit of vengeance, Tom Brandon killed the brothers, Oscar and Houston Keene, Lazy 20 riders, and the governor ordered Tom brought in for trial. The Brandons were then so powerful that they felt they could defy even the governor of the state with impunity, so Tom refused to come in and no one cared to take on the job of bringing him in.

A large part of the cattle rustling at that time was done by homesteaders or squatters who were having a hard time making a living, and by cowboys desirous of making a few extra dollars for a spree. Typical of these latter was John Connell, whose father ran the J-Bar-3 spread and who admitted in later years that at the age of sixteen, he and a youthful partner, Louis Harrell, rustled a carload of steers from his father's herd. When the boys tried to collect the sixteen-hundred-dollar-draft given in

payment, the bank refused to honor it because they knew the boys owned no cattle. John called in his friend, Bill Parker, who laid down an ultimatum.

"I never robbed a bank or killed a banker," he told the cashier, "but I'm a-goin' across to the saloon. If them boys hain't over there in ten minutes with their money, I'm a-comin' back an' git hit, an' I may kill me a banker." In less than the allotted ten minutes the boys had the money. A few weeks later John took unto himself a wife and used his share of the proceeds to furnish a cabin on J-Bar-3 land.

On that epic Saturday morning in May, 1910, Bill Parker and his brother, Bob, rode into Perry and tied their horses at the hitch-rack behind Powell Brothers' Taylor County Saloon. Dixon Waters sighted them as they walked around to the street in front, and he instantly dropped the piece of pine upon which he had been whittling, stepped inside the door of his store and buckled on his guns.

Walking slowly up to Bill Parker, who stood some twenty feet apart from his brother, Waters said, "Bill, yo're not at another man's house today, an' yo're not a-settin' alongside of a female. You seem to have the idee that yo're a bad man. Last Sat'dy night you drilled Tom McKnight over a two-bit wench. Now, if yo're such a bad bearcat, show yore claws!"

Parker did. He reached for the gun in his lefthand holster and at the same time, with a knife tightly clutched in his right, slashed Waters across the stomach, ripping his belly wide open. Waters staggered back and three times his .44 belched flaming lead into the breast of Bill Parker, who dropped lifeless to the wooden sidewalk without firing a single shot.

"Why, you dirty son," Bob Parker yelled, "you can't do that to no brother o' mine!" His gun bucked and roared as he poured two blasts at Waters. Waters staggered with the impact of the bullets, one slug passing through his left arm and the other piercing the fleshy part of his leg. He fired once and Bob Parker fell face down beside his brother.

As Waters turned away, John Malcolm, another Towles rider, opened fire from across the street, his lead whistling past Waters' head. Turning his attention to this new assailant, Waters silenced Malcolm's guns with a single well-placed bullet through the heart. Reeling as he stepped back from the crimson pool in which he stood, he dropped his smoking gun and tried to hold together the gaping wound in his belly which the treacherous knife of Bill Parker had laid open. He staggered into Peacock's store, his breath coming in tortured gasps as he fell across the counter in a vain attempt to hold himself on his feet. Slowly he slumped to the floor, rolled over on his back and stared at the smoke-blackened ceiling with unseeing eyes.

Elzie Church of the Lazy 20, who had been talking to Bob Parker when the shooting began, seemed paralyzed with the swiftness with which hot lead had snuffed out the lives of three of his friends. With a hysterical shout he roused himself to action.

"Come on, all you damned Brandons," he yelled, discharging his gun in the air, "let's make hit unanimous!"

HENRY HORACE, rider for the Three Links, dashed out of the saloon and took up the challenge. As smoke and flaming lead belched from his guns, Church staggered back against the brick wall. He dropped his empty gun and dragged his lefthand gun from its holster. Turning it in the direction of the roaring guns of Horace, he took careful aim. Once, twice, his bullets sped true to the mark, the third tearing a hole in the rough boards of the sidewalk in front of him. They had blasted each other down and both were dead before they hit the planks.

By this time the battle was raging all up and down Perry's main street. Preston Cox, tax collector, stepped to the door of the courthouse to see what was happening, and a chunk of flying lead slammed him back through the open door. Colonel Gornto ran to the door of his store to gaze in horrified amazement at the terrible havoc being wrought, his bloodless lips moving soundlessly in prayer. Lead splashed all around him. He spread his hands helplessly in silent supplication, his fine eyes blazing with divine fervor. A leaden missile turned him halfway around and he dropped in the doorway, his rumpled gray thatch slowly assuming the color of the gory pool in which it lay.

When at last the smoke of battle had cleared, the street was deserted save for the dead and dying. Walter Brandon and Bunk Padgett, one of his riders, lay dead farther up the street, mute evidence of the efficiency of the guns of Deputy Sheriff Evan Rhodes, alias McGuire, imported from Red Top, Oklahoma, as a peace officer. All told, three Brandon men, four of the Towles outfit and two innocent bystanders were killed, and many of both factions sorely wounded.

When the dead and injured had been carted away, Jim Towles went to the Taylor County saloon and bought a thirty-gallon barrel of corn whiskey and rolled it to the east side of the courthouse square, which was acknowledged Lazy 20 territory. He up-ended the barrel, knocked the head in and hung a tin cup beside a crudely lettered sign on which appeared the legend, "For friends of the Lazy 20." Not to be outdone in hospitality, the Brandons placed a similar barrel of liquor on the west side of the square, labeled, "For friends of the Brandons."

Sheriff Jud Head, who had taken no part

in the gun battle, wired the governor in Tallahassee, "If you don't send troops to preserve law and order a hundred men will be killed before the week is out. Am resigning."

Governor Park Trammell, later elected to the Senate, wired Frank Lipscomb his appointment to fill the place vacated by Sheriff Head, and assured him that a company of soldiers would arrive at two o'clock the next day. He also instructed the new sheriff to go out and get Tom Brandon, "dead or alive."

After Tom Brandon had been outlawed for the killing of the Keene brothers, he sent to Georgia for Emmett Douglas to kill off the entire Padgett family because they were suspected of rustling Brandon beef. The Padgetts were said to be outlaws who came to Florida from Echols, Georgia, after the "Cracker State" got too hot to hold them. They brought a small herd of scrub cattle with them.

As the Padgett clan included some eight or ten families, and as Brandon had not specified any exceptions to his terse order to "get the whole damned bunch of 'em," Douglas set himself to figure out a plan whereby the job could be done with the greatest dispatch, and at the same time with as little personal risk as would be compatible with efficiency. Poison seemed to be the most logical method for a wholesale murder such as he planned, so on a certain moonless night he visited the wells of the Padgetts and dropped into each what he thought was a lethal dose of strychnine. He either miscalculated the dosage, or perhaps the drug had deteriorated with age. In any event, the only harm it did was to make a few Padgetts quite ill; there were no fatalities recorded.

With the failure of his plan to poison the Georgia cattlemen, he decided to get them one at a time, even though it might take a little longer. He'd "shoot them where he found them, and leave them where he shot them." This plan was more effective, particularly in view of the fact that he always closely observed the primal law of self-preservation. Early one morning as Tom Padgett rode out to relieve Hardy, who had been watching a small herd out in the scrub, Douglas hid in the dense palmetto growth along the trail and shot him down as he came abreast of the hiding place. Douglas then slipped swiftly through the bush, crept as close as he dared to Hardy, who was dozing in the saddle waiting for his brother. A single shot from his .30-30 Winchester accounted for Number Two of the ill-fated family. He was doing all right—thus far.

Several days elapsed before another Padgett crossed the sights of the Douglas rifle. Nowlie Padgett was hazing a bunch of yearlings out of the creek bottom when a bullet slammed into his pony's rump. With a squeal of pain the pony reared, pitching Nowlie over his head. The Padgett rider rose to his feet, drew his gun and blazed aimlessly in the general direction from which the mysterious shot had seemed to come. The volley from his revolver only served to point out to Douglas his exact location, and the next shot from the rifle of Tom Brandon's hired killer crashed through Nowlie's brain. Number Three was accounted for. Douglas' self-satisfaction mounted, and with his growing confidence his sense of caution waned.

But all good things must come to an end. The grapevine of the African bush is no more effective than that of the Florida swamp country. The Padgetts knew full well who was responsible for the alarming decrease in their ranks, and so did Sheriff Lipscomb. So he appointed a man to bring Douglas in—a man he knew would not fail in his mission. J. Frank King, a surveyor, and one of the best rifle shots in the county, was a man of few words. He didn't elaborate upon the method he used to get Douglas; he merely brought his dead body back to Perry with the report that he was killed while resisting arrest.

BY this time Tom Brandon was badly wanted, but still he made no attempt to leave the Three Links range. Sheriff Lipscomb deputized Frank King, "Beetree" Allen, trapper and bee-hunter, John Church, a brother of Elzie, and Noah Padgett to carry out the governor's orders. The posse rode down on Nine Mile Creek and hid in the scrub oak near Tom Brandon's line camp cabin.

Early in the morning, after Tom's riders had left for the brush, Tom came out and sat on a wooden bench on the shady side of the cabin. Sheriff Lipscomb climbed a tree and killed Tom with a shot from his .30-30. The posse carried the body back to Perry and a hastily impaneled coroner's jury returned a verdict of "Came to his death by gunshot wounds at the hands of Sheriff Lipscomb's posse while resisting arrest." He was buried near the old Brandon homestead on Nine Mile Creek.

Sheriff Lipscomb had successfully completed his first official mission, and the town was under martial law, with soldiers encamped on a vacant lot opposite the jail yard, but even the governor's soldiers were powerless to halt the reign of bloodshed in Taylor County.

That afternoon Bob Stripling, farmer and peace advocate, went to the sheriff's office to remonstrate with him and to make a plea for the peaceful settlement of the disputes between the ranchers.

"Frank," he said, "this bloodshed's got to stop. Bring some of these here trouble-makers to court an' send 'em to the pen'tentiary an' they'll quit this feudin'."

"I'm a-doin' all I can, Bob. I got Tom Brandon this mawnin', an' I'll get the rest of 'em afore I'm through."

"That's jest hit, Frank. Yo're as bad as the

rest of 'em. Wusser. You climbed a tree an' kilt Tom Brandon 'thout givin' him a chance. You know you did."

"Bob," the sheriff said quietly, "you know that's a damn lie."

"No 'tain't. You murdered him in cold blood. Yo're a killer."

"Get out of my office," the sheriff ordered, his lips white and quivering. "Get out!"

Stripling stood his ground. "Put me out, damn you! Put me out!"

The sheriff grappled with the intruder and a rough-and-tumble fistfight ensued, with Lipscomb getting a little the best of the argument.

"Wild Bill" Wilder, operator of a small general store directly opposite the jail, was sitting on a wooden packing case in front of his place of business. Wild Bill had the reputation of being a trouble-hunter and a bad man to cross. Seeing that Stripling was getting the worst of the fistic encounter, he rose slowly from his seat and kicked it back with his heels. As he reached inside the door for his gun belt, he told his wife, Maggie, "This has gone fur enough. I don't like the way Tom Brandon was kilt a damn bit." He started across the street toward the office where the sheriff and Stripling were still belaboring each other.

"Come back, Bill!" Maggie screamed. "There's been killin' enough. Please come back," she entreated. "Don't start any more trouble."

Bill never slackened his pace nor looked back. "This county's too damn small for me an' Frank Lipscomb, an' I aim to stay," he flung grimly over his shoulder.

When he reached the door he called to the sheriff, "Frank, turn Bob loose. I'm ready fer you!"

The sheriff released Stripling and waved Bill back.

"For God's sake, Bill," he pleaded, "go back! Don't get into this!"

As he threw up his hands in a token of peace, Wilder's guns spat fire and one bullet tore through the sheriff's upraised hand, while another shattered his right elbow. Wilder walked closer and calmly drove another bullet through the helpless Lipscomb's heart.

Ramming fresh shells into his gun as he started back across the street, Wild Bill muttered to himself, "Well, I mought as well kill that other polecat while I'm about hit."

He turned around and went slowly up the street toward where Chief Deputy Rhodes was standing by the Louisiana Lunch Room. Rhodes saw Bill coming and knew that he was coming after him. He cupped his hands to his mouth and called, "Don't come up town, Bill. If you do, I'm going to kill you."

Rhodes walked around the corner and stepped through the side door into the restaurant, standing just inside the open door. He saw Bill as he turned the corner fifty feet away. Rhodes then sprang out on the sidewalk, facing Wilder, at the same time drawing his .44 bolt-action Smith & Wesson. His first shot struck Bill in the stomach. Wilder's gun roared three times, but all three bullets tore into the boardwalk at his feet. He fell upon his face and rolled over lifeless.

Turning to the bystanders Rhodes said, "Boys, you know I had to do it. You all knowed Bill and knowed he was a dangerous man."

No one replied, and noting the hostile looks on the faces of the men around him, he said disgustedly, "This is one hell of a town! I'm a-goin' to ketch the first train out of it." Then he started for the depot a quarter of a mile away.

Jim Barbee, a Brandon rider, got his pony and cut around through the scrub ahead of Rhodes, picking up John Morgan and four other men as he went. The Oklahoma gunman had to pass a thick clump of head-high dog fennels on his way to the railroad, and as he came abreast of the high weeds, a volley of bullets literally riddled him.

Hearing the shots, Dr. Culpepper ran toward the mortally wounded deputy. His assailants had slipped away through the scrub which bordered the sandy road. He raised the dying man's head and asked, "What was the trouble, Rhodes?"

Rhodes replied, "I've seen Dodge City in its palmiest days, and I was in Red Top when Geronimo was on the warpath and the Wheelers and the Fishers ran the town, but this is one place that's hell on earth!" He coughed and grimaced with pain as a crimson stream gushed from the corner of his mouth. "I came here," he gasped, "to bring law and order—and I—died—tryin' to walk—the middle line."

Deputy Bud Parker was appointed to fill Sheriff Lipscomb's place. He resigned sometime later, but after staying out of office for twenty-five years, was re-elected in 1940 and is still sheriff of Taylor County.

THE days immediately following the deaths of Sheriff Lipscomb and Deputy Evan Rhodes were the most peaceful that Taylor County had seen for many long years. The presence of the soldiers had a psychological effect on the cowmen and they stayed close to their home ranges until martial law was lifted. It was not long after the departure of the militia, however, that the ranchers renewed their quarrels and men began to die of lead poisoning with old-time regularity.

Evan Lambert, a half-breed Seminole Indian, had taken up a homestead a few miles from Perry, and Bob Padgett jumped his claim. Padgett built a cabin on Lambert's land and was on the roof one morning putting on the top of

(Continued on page 142)

ROGER SUDDEN

By THOMAS H. RADDALL

THE STORY THUS FAR:

ROGER SUDDEN, handsome young Jacobite, returns from the Continent to his family seat, Suddenholt, in Kent, on the night of January thirtieth, 1749, when the local Jacobite club is meeting there. He left Oxford to follow Prince Charlie into exile in '45 and is now returning to England to rally Jacobite support for him. He finds the estate in sad repair and his older brother, CHARLES, who inherited his father's taste for and debts from drinking, living off money borrowed from his feeble-minded AUNT PENNY. Charles gives him a cold welcome and assures him that none of the Jacobites in England will risk their lives for Prince Charlie. Disgusted and disillusioned, Roger leaves Suddenholt, promising his Aunt Penny that he will go to the colonies and bring back enough money to restore Suddenholt to its former glory.

On the road to London, penniless and un-

ILLUSTRATED BY HARVE STEIN

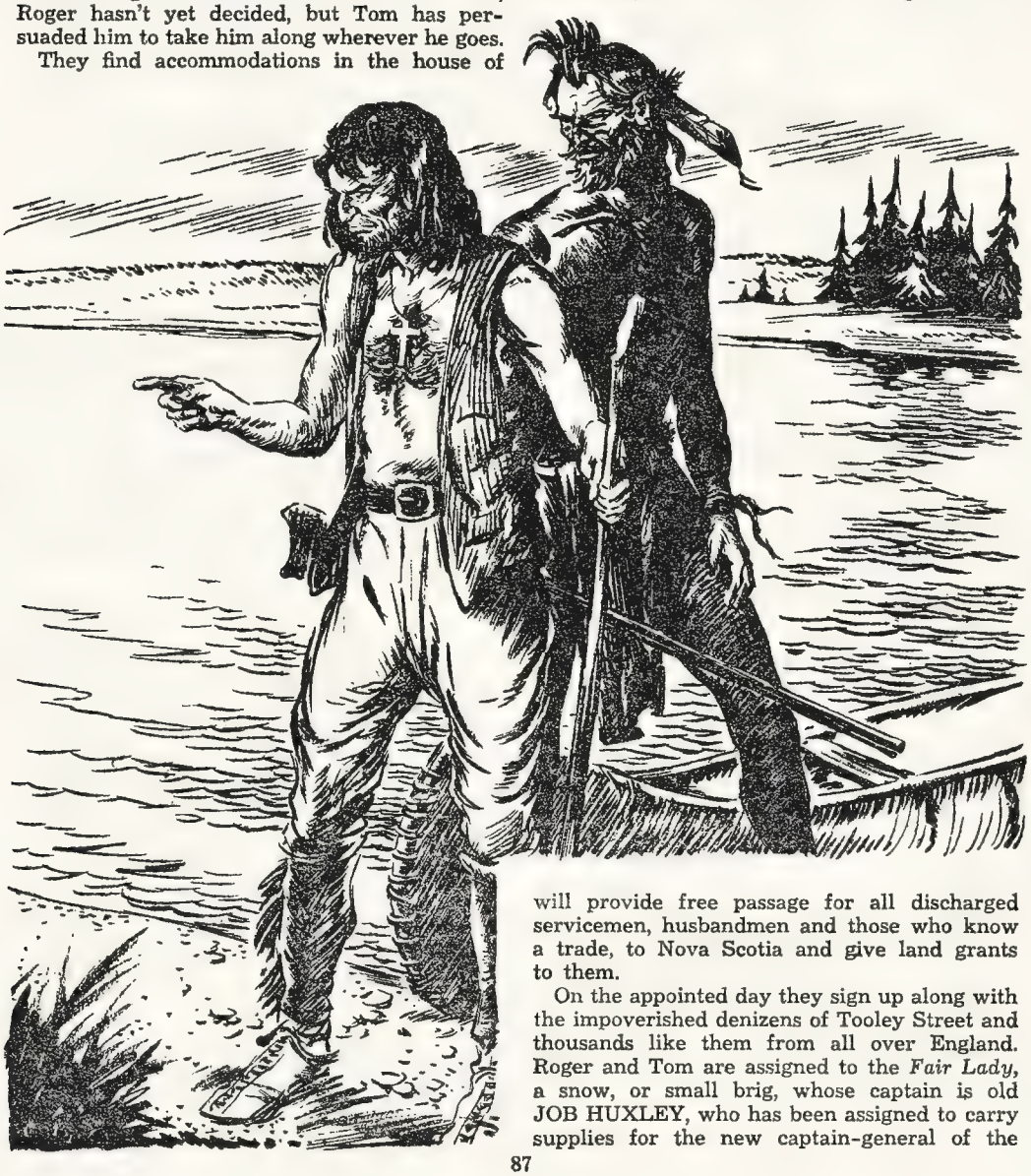
"Thieves! You have no right in Acadie!" the mad priest cried in a strangled voice. The light of his monomania glittered in his eyes.

decided as to his destination, he is held up by TOM FULLER, a sailor turned highwayman. Managing to disarm the would-be holdup man, he decides to help him rob the Gravesend tide-coach to get some money. The sole occupants of the coach turn out to be two foppish British officers, COLONEL BELCHER and MAJOR WOLFE, who had fought Prince Charlie's men at Culloden. Delighted to find his victims are also his political enemies, Roger taunts them as he robs them, letting them know that he is a Jacobite but not revealing his name.

Reaching London, Tom Fuller guides Roger to Tooley Street in the Southwark slums, where they decide to hide out until they can find a boat leaving for one of the colonies—which one, Roger hasn't yet decided, but Tom has persuaded him to take him along wherever he goes.

They find accommodations in the house of ISAAC TROPE and his housekeeper, LUMLEY, and get to know the other inhabitants: SALLY MADIGAN, the pretty prostitute whose former room they occupy, and whose advances Roger repulses; BOB, the hackney-coachman, and his family; NED and JACK, the chairmen; LITTLE BOB, the pickpocket; MAGGS, the chimney-sweep, and his family; VACE, the journeyman-barber; KILLICK, the boatman, and his wife, an oysterwoman.

Roger's and Tom's decision to leave Tooley Street and their choice of destination is made for them when Tom is nearly apprehended as one of the tide-coach highwaymen. This misfortune coincides with the announcement of the Lord Mayor of London that the government



will provide free passage for all discharged servicemen, husbandmen and those who know a trade, to Nova Scotia and give land grants to them.

On the appointed day they sign up along with the impoverished denizens of Tooley Street and thousands like them from all over England. Roger and Tom are assigned to the *Fair Lady*, a snow, or small brig, whose captain is old JOB HUXLEY, who has been assigned to carry supplies for the new captain-general of the

colony, COLONEL CORNWALLIS. On board they meet the only two paying passengers, CAPTAIN JOHN FOY and his wife, MARY FOY. Foy explains to Roger that the real purpose of this expedition is to build an English fort at Halifax strong enough to attack the French at Louisburg, the fort once captured by the British and recently returned when peace was signed. Roger is shocked by Mrs. Foy's unfeminine interest in the colonial struggle, and surprised when she rebuffs his hitherto irresistible attempts at love-making.

The *Fair Lady* reaches Chebucto harbor in Nova Scotia in June, preceded by Cornwallis' ship, the *Sphinx*, and one by one, the transports arrive. COLONEL MASCARENE and his council come from Annapolis to start a government, Warburton's Regiment is brought from Louisburg, and gradually a town begins to grow on the edge of the wilderness. Cornwallis orders the colonists to form groups and choose leaders, and to Roger's dismay, his friends from Tooley Street choose him. The clearing grows, huts are built, and INIGO BRUCE, the military surveyor, maps out the tiny town, which is named Halifax after the head of the Board of Trade and Plantations in Whitehall. Finally, lots are drawn, and to the settlers' indignation, the town is only big enough for them to have tiny plots within its rough palisades; the rest of their land must be chosen out in the wilds.

Roger, bored and discouraged, drinks heavily and runs through his and Tom's "fortune," giving his last sixpence to Sally Madigan, who accosts him one night on his way home from a sutler's den.

CAPTAIN GORHAM, leader of the rangers who are assigned to protect the colonists, invites Roger to join his band, but he declines. However, he does agree to take his group from Tooley Street across the bay to work for Gorham's man, GILMAN, on a sawmill Cornwallis has ordered built. Gilman, Roger finds, is a shrewd fellow who is idling on the job so that Cornwallis will become discouraged with the mill's progress and sell it to Gilman for a song. Roger and the cockneys live in idleness with Gorham's rangers as fall approaches and the storms begin to lash Halifax.

One September day, a roving band of Micmac Indians falls upon the men at the mill site, beheads Vace and Jack and scalps Ned and Maggs. The rangers pursue them, but only manage to kill three before the rest escape in canoes. The rangers behead two of these in retaliation and scalp a third, who wears a small stone fish on a thong around his neck. They throw the scalped body into the lake and return to the mill site. Roger, who is carrying a decorated tomahawk he has picked up, stays behind, hoping to retrieve the heads of his friends. While looking through the underbrush to see if the Indians may have dropped their trophies while fleeing, he discovers a hidden canoe. Suddenly three Micmacs jump on him from behind, bind and gag him, and take him away, nearly unconscious, in their canoe.

He is taken to a Micmac camp in Shubenacadie, where he is held prisoner and questioned by GAUTIER, an Acadian trader who lives with the Indians. They suspect him of having killed Bosoley (Beau Soleil), the chieftain to whom the tomahawk belonged, but they do not kill him because they wish to recover the sacred amulet which Bosoley wore —the little stone fish. Roger does not tell them where it is, hoping his secret will save his life. He is held prisoner for many months, during which time he learns the Micmac tongue from Gautier. Finally, however, SAN BADEES KOAP, a chieftain, orders his death. He is saved by WAPKE, Bosoley's widow, who has taken a liking to him and demands that he be given to her.

For five years he is kept with the tribe in the wilderness, carefully guarded so that he cannot escape. When Wapke's mourning period is over and she wishes to become his wife in fact, Roger puts her off, telling her that he has taken an oath of celibacy, but he finally admits that he loves another woman—the red-haired wife of John Foy. Wapke's pride makes her give him up and she arranges for her father to sell him to the French at Louisburg.

One day the commandant of the Louisburg prison sends Roger to do chores for his mistress, MME. DUCUDRAI, proprietress of a tavern. Roger recognizes her from his Paris days and she, in order to buy his discretion about her somewhat lurid past, gets him a job with M. RODRIGUES, a wealthy merchant who runs a smuggling trade with the English colonies in addition to his thriving business with the French. As bookkeeper at Rodrigues et Fils, Roger learns a great deal about the business and Rodrigues, who needs another agent in Halifax, offers to set him up as a secret partner there. Roger accepts with alacrity and Rodrigues arranges for his escape aboard one of the smuggling vessels, the *Fair Lady*.

Roger finds that Halifax has grown, but it is still an impoverished and defenseless settlement compared to Louisburg. Many of his Tooley Street friends have died off from disease and hardship, but Old Trope has a boarding-house in which Roger gets a room. He reports to Rodrigues' agents—whom he finds to his amazement are the Foys—and gets an advance from them for a trading expedition into Micmac territory. He is ordered to tell no one of his relations with them. Tom Fuller has joined a band of rangers, but Roger buys his release, and that of some of his friends, so they may accompany him. They start into the wilderness. Roger stops at the lake where Bosoley was killed and retrieves the little

stone fish from the skeleton's neck, after which the company visits the Micmac camp where Roger was held prisoner. It is deserted except for an old woman who tells him the tribe has gone to the Acadian town of Beauséjour or Oonamaagik, and that war is in the wind. ABBÉ LE LOUTRE, a mad French priest who controls the Micmac tribes by a mixture of superstition and trade—he sells them guns and firewater, which the British refuse to do—has called all the Micmac warriors together.

PART IV

In April, Roger returned to Halifax with his store of furs by sloop around the coast from Fundy Bay. He found the provincial capital ankle-deep in the spring thaw. A black ooze dripped down the streets toward the harbor as if Citadel Hill were some sort of mud volcano in slow eruption—ooze fetid with slops and refuse flung from the houses during the winter and exposed now with the melting of the snow.

The drab wooden houses had the haggard look of prisoners emerging from long and dark confinement, huddling together against the cold spring rain, blinking in the fitful bursts of sunshine. But the people were brisk enough. The lower town was thronged.

A few carriages splashed along—he noticed Sally Madigan in one, laughing beside a middle-aged major of the Forty-seventh—and a small rank of sedan-chairs stood for hire at the Parade; but horseback was still the accepted mode of keeping genteel feet out of the mire.

Roger sent Tom Fuller with a note advising Foy that he would call that night. In the small chill attic at Trope's he changed reluctantly from the comfortable buckskins, worn to his lean shape by nine months' travel, to the coarse and ill-fitting garments which proclaimed him a townsman of the poorer class. Rain was falling steadily when he set forth. He picked his way along Hollis Street with care to avoid the deeper holes. There were lampposts at every corner and Cornwallis and his successors had made attempts to keep them lit; but the posts were only ten feet high and the lanterns too easily stolen or smashed by roistering seamen. An east wind wafted through the dark a salty reek of harbor water.

At his knock, the Foys' door opened on a stout chain and the woman Jenny inspected him for a moment by the light of a candle.

"Oh! It's you!"

"The bad penny," he said coldly.

Mary Foy was in the parlor, wearing one of those green things that went so well with her eyes and hair. He paused in the doorway and bowed, saying handsomely, "Green's your color, ma'am—and I like the smaller hoops. A new mode you're setting?"

"An old thing from London," she said quickly. "Do sit down."

He faced her across the glow of a bright fire and a spaniel got up from the hearthstone, sniffed his knee suspiciously and then nuzzled his hand. He stroked the dog's ears and looked upon Foy's wife appreciatively. Spermaceti tapers in a three-branched candelabrum competed wanly with the firelight, which struck gleams of copper from her hair and gave her eyes the dark look he remembered.

"I've come to report to your husband."

"John's away again. You can make your report to me."

"May I ask where he goes so frequently?"

"You may not, Mr. Sudden."

His lips twitched. "Well, ma'am, I wish to report a very successful season. I've established posts at Piziquid, Minas and Fort Lawrence, as your husband wished. That gives us a steady sutling trade with the troops stationed at those places—mostly in drink, of course. There's some business with the friendly Indians who hang about the forts, but they're a drunken lot, too lazy to catch much fur and too careless in the skinning and curing of it. So I left a man in charge of each post and sent the others through the wild country where there's more and better fur."

"And much more risk!"

"We managed very well. One of my men, Ricker, was murdered by savages at a place called Merigomish." He frowned. "I recovered most of his goods—and took hard pay for what was gone."

"I don't understand."

"It was nothing, really. I borrowed the services of a few rangers from Gorham's company at Fort Lawrence and journeyed through the woods on snowshoes. Came upon the savages camped in a snowstorm by a frozen harbor called Piktook, where the French come in summer to cut mast timber for Louisburg. Six men, one or two squaws, a few youngsters—we killed and scalped the lot. Most of the stolen goods was in the wigwams and we found Ricker's head, hard frozen, in one of their pack-baskets. I had to pay the rangers for their time and trouble, of course, but fortunately the governor's paying a good bounty for Micmac scalps just now. They'll fetch twenty-five pounds each, which will pretty well repay the loss all 'round."

He lifted his gaze from the dog, which was wriggling with pleasure at his knee, and saw her eyes wide with horror. She shivered and burst out, "Ah, how could you? And how can you talk of it in that cold-blooded way? If you knew how terrible you seem!"

An indifferent hitch of his shoulders. "Fur is fur, whether you skin it from an Indian or

a mink. Have you ever considered the sufferings of a trapped mink? Besides, the Indians suffered a more merciful death than they gave Ricker. The point is, ma'am, I couldn't go on trading in that wild country with Ricker unavenged. 'Twould have made me an object of contempt throughout the tribes. As it is, the wind carries a whiff of a different sort. The Micmac will respect the name of Bosoley because he took a stiff price for his man."

"Bosoley?"

"Beau Soleil—my name amongst the Indians."

"Oh!" Her tone had an edge. "How very odd! I should have said you were neither handsome nor sunny, Mr. Sudden. What did the savages do to you, to make you so very cruel?"

"I'm afraid that's too long a story, ma'am—and much too dull. Here's the inventory of stock on hand in my truck-houses as of March thirty-first."

She gave the sheet a glance, but her clouded eyes lifted at once.

"You'll see," Roger pursued, a little impatiently, "that our goods needs replenishment, especially the rum. I can take care of that with the proceeds of my furs, of course. Here's a list of the furs—"

"Tell me the main things. I can go over your reports with John later."

"Well, to begin with"—he tried to keep the satisfaction out of his voice—"I've about three thousand pounds' weight of beaver. I could sell 'em in Halifax to Joshua Mauger, say, but I propose to ship 'em to Boston for the best price. Apart from beaver I've a hundred otter, a hundred and forty-six marten, and four hundred and twenty-three assorted fisher, mink, wildcat and bear skins . . . not worth as much as the beaver, you understand. Perhaps I'd better explain the trade a bit. The standard of currency's the spring beaver skin. Two spring beaver are reckoned worth three fall skins. To go on from there, a pound of prime spring beaver's worth three of marten, or six mink, or two fox, or ten muskrat, or—"

She broke in, "You'd better put that on paper. It's rather confusing."

"It's written, it's here in my report," he said curtly. "Well, if you want the bones of the matter, ma'am, we've a profit, based on the current price of prime beaver in Boston and allowing for freight and insurance—I'll get Mr. Saul to underwrite the shipment, I think, the stuff's too valuable to risk even on so short a voyage—a profit of something like fifteen thousand dollars."

"Why," she asked, "don't you reckon in English money? I'll have to reckon it in pounds, shillings and pence before I understand what it means."

"There's little or no English currency in the province. The governor has to fetch Spanish silver from the West Indies to pay the troops, and that's about the only hard money in circulation. So I reckon in dollars."

She stepped swiftly to an escritoire and figured intently with pencil and paper, catching the pencil end reflectively from time to time in her short white teeth.

"In other words," she announced, looking at him over a slim green shoulder, "there's a clear gain of something like three thousand, seven hundred and fifty pounds . . . and of that, twenty-eight hundred or so is yours under the agreement. I should say you'd spent a very profitable winter, Mr. Sudden!"

The Scottish accent had crept into her voice again, but the note of contempt was there, too. She was charming in the mingled light of fire and candles, and it was queer to hear a pretty woman calculating with that precise rolling of the r's which his memory associated with canny men in the countinghouses of Glasgow and Auld Reekie. He had a swift suspicion that she was more than her husband's assistant, that she was the banker herself. But what was strange about that? The world was full of clever wives and tipsy husbands.

She added, seeing his hesitation, "I hope you're satisfied?"

"Not at all," he said bluntly. "The woods are full of opportunities and there's precious little time. That's why I want to see your husband. I want to reach out in several directions. That means more capital. I must have a ship of my own, for instance."

"Why?"

"To supply my posts—they're all on or near tide-water—and to obtain those supplies in the first place. Prices in Halifax are an outrage. No wonder Saul and Mauger and their little clique are getting rich! Well, I propose to buy my goods in Louisburg."

She looked at him oddly. "But isn't that against the law, Mr. Sudden?"

"Why don't you call me Roger?" We're partners, after all."

"Are we?" She lifted an eyebrow. "I'm not so sure I want to be partner in a smuggling venture . . . Roger."

He snorted, "Why not? Every Halifax merchant smuggles when he gets a chance; and from what I saw in Louisburg, I should say every merchant in Boston as well. Look here. I have to compete in the woods with French traders who offer the Indians better stuff at lower prices. And the savages are accustomed to French goods—they like 'em and ask for 'em. Mary, with a ship of my own to assure a supply from Louisburg, I can push my posts far to the eastward, where the Indians haven't been spoiled and the best fur's to be had."

"And where you're very likely to be murdered, Roger Sudden!"

He shrugged cheerfully. "Fortune's for those who don't mind risks. Besides, the savages are afraid of me. I have a talisman. But we're getting away from business. I want to charter a couple of brigs in addition to the one I buy outright."

"Whatever for?"

"There's going to be a pretty penny in Bay of Fundy freights this summer. Several thousand New England troops are coming to take Fort Beauséjour without the formality of declaring war."

"How do you know?" she said shrewdly, an appraising look in her eye.

"A friend, an officer at Fort Anne. The governor sent Colonel Monckton to Boston last year and it's all arranged. But that's not all, Mary. I'm ready to gamble on some fat shipping business after the siege. One can't be sure, of course. It's like an idle exercise in arithmetic—you pick up figures here and there and add them up, and they make a sum. It may mean something or nothing. I'm thinking of the Acadians in all those settlements along the Fundy shore. They've always refused to take the English oath of allegiance, always kept on the sunny side of the Micmacs and Malecites, always sent tithes to Quebec, always given a hand when their French compatriots came down to strike at Fort Anne. Some of the younger and more reckless men have taken part in Indian raids on Halifax."

"Well?" Mary was frowning.

"Cornwallis and Hopson thought they could win over those people by tolerance and a show of force—hence the little English forts along the Fundy side. No good, of course. Le Loutre was too much for 'em. But now there's a very different sort of governor—this tough old soldier, Lawrence, who got a nasty whiff of Le Loutre's powder at Chignecto four years back. And he's got the governors of New England at his elbow urging him to stamp out French influence in Nova Scotia once and for all.

"Well, Roger?"

"It's whispered in the officers' mess at Fort Anne—and at Fort Edward, Fort Vieux Logis and Fort Lawrence—that after Beauséjour falls, the Acadians will be removed from Fundy, lock, stock and barrel. That'll take ships, Mary. Ships!"

"Where will they take them?" she asked in a hushed voice.

"Who knows? Not to Canada, certainly. Lawrence wouldn't hand over such a fine lot of *coureurs de bois* to swell the forces of France."

"What do they think, in the messes?"

"Some say France, but that's absurd on the face of it. Some say England, but I've a notion Whitehall won't want anything to do with it. No, somewhere this side the ocean—some of the southern colonies, or Louisiana. A good long voyage at any rate—and I hope to get a good rate."

"And a long speculation it seems to me," she objected. "I don't think my husband will lend you a shilling on it."

"That means you know he won't!" The Sudden chin came up. "Very well, Mary, I'll borrow the money elsewhere. There must be someone in Halifax—"

"Please! Not so hasty!" she returned quickly, with a pink spot in each cheek. "I merely said it wasn't the sort of business we—my husband's principal—had in mind when he offered you a partnership. It's like—it's like chartering in the slave trade. I mean, the money's tainted."

"Pish! All money's tainted. But it's mighty useful stuff and I intend to gather all I can. Now in this matter of ships, I propose to buy outright the *Fair Lady*. She's handy for smuggling and Old Hux is just the man for it. And I'll charter two stout brigs—although something bigger might be better for the Fundy business. Some of the old transports are still on the coast. I happen to know the *Duke of Bedford* can be had for seventy-five pounds a month."

"As you wish," she said in a dull tone. "But it seems to me you'll arouse some unwelcome curiosity in Halifax. If I—if we finance these schemes of yours, how shall you account for your sudden wealth?"

He grinned. "Sudden's my name! And this is a country where no one can afford to be surprised at anything. In ten or fifteen years there'll be wealthy men in Halifax who yesterday hadn't a decent bit of leather underfoot." He glanced whimsically at his own cheap clumps, and so did she. "My dear lady, I've told you only a few of my 'schemes' for making money. I'm as full of notions as a German clock."

She said tartly, "Don't you think of anything but money, Roger?"

He regarded her curiously for a moment. She tossed her head back as she said it, and the red-gold hair glowed in the firelight. The slender nose was up and the lips pressed very straight. In the lace-fringed yoke of her bodice, the rounded white skin lifted and fell indignantly.

"What else is there?" he retorted, and bowed and left in eager search for Old Hux.

CHAPTER XIX

THE PATH TO FORTUNE

So much to do, so little time! In an effort to be everywhere at once Roger commenced the swift canoe journeys back and forth across the province, following routes known only to the Indians and himself, which were to

make him a legend in Halifax in the next two years.

The matter of ships was soon settled. He bought the *Fair Lady* outright and engaged the services of Job Huxley with her.

"Ecod, I never thought I'd come down to taking orders from a man out o' my own fo'c'sle," declared that ruffian cheerfully.

"There must be a first time to everything," Roger laughed. "I may yet make an honest woman of the *Fair Lady,* who knows?"

"I'll chance that," Old Hux said, and winked.

Next came a year's charter of the *Duke of Bedford,* which cost him ninety pounds a month instead of the seventy-five he had so confidently expected. But he did not hesitate. And he snapped up a roomy Salem brig, the *Sea Horse,* at forty. Not a day too soon; things were astir in Boston. By the first week in May preparations were well advanced for the expedition.

Through shrewd and all-powerful Mr. Apthorpe at Boston (whose commission was a thumping twenty per cent), he succeeded in chartering the *Fair Lady*—after two quick and furtive trips to Louisburg—at two hundred pounds a month, the *Duke of Bedford* at three hundred and the *Sea Horse* at a hundred and fifty. "Not unreasonable Rates," wrote Apthorpe smugly, "considering the Dangers of Navigation in Fundy Bay at the foggy Time of Year, and the Risques attendant upon the carriage of Troops engaged in War."

Roger was at Fort Lawrence when the fleet arrived, and he watched the army disembark. Most were Massachusetts men in coarse blue regimentals which they laid aside as soon as they got ashore, working in soiled leather breeches and a great variety of ragged shirts. The only regulars were a few companies of the Fortieth from Fort Anne, in shabby red-and-buff, and a battery of brass field-guns which Lawrence had sent up from Halifax. They made a busy and purposeful swarm on the low ridge in the marshes, and the French watched them carefully from the ramparts of Fort Beauséjour across the red stream of the Missaguash.

It was a temptation to stay and see the fighting. But pshaw! What was a skirmish in these woods and marshes to an affair like Culloden? What mattered was the presence of several thousand soldiers and camp-followers, all working up a famous thirst in the hot weather. Some hopeful sutlers had come from Boston with the expedition, but Roger had the advantage of a truck-house well established at Fort Lawrence, in charge of the old ranger Corcoran.

He made sure that Corcoran was well supplied, and saw to it that additional supplies were carried free of charge up the Bay in those handsomely chartered vessels. Then, with Tom Fuller at the bow paddle, he set off for Halifax by way of Minas Basin and the Shubenacadie, using a light canoe made for him by friendly Micmacs.

THE old war trail was now familiar to the point of monotony, but their journey was enlivened by an odd little encounter at the almost deserted Micmac town. On the riverbank they met Gautier, armed with hatchet and gun and wearing nothing but a skin clout and a bedraggled eagle feather. His hairy body glistened with bear grease and his dark face was bizarre with red ochre stripes. Behind him stood a short dark man with piercing black eyes, dressed in homespun breeches and a grimy waistcoat that hung open and exposed a silver crucifix that hung about his neck. He had buckskin leggings and beaded moccasins. Their canoe lay on the red clay bank with a packbasket and a pair of blue blankets.

"You leave?" Roger said.

"For Beauséjour," Gautier answered.

Roger wondered if they had smelled what was afoot there. If not, why Gautier's war paint?

"Beau Soleil," Gautier announced in his strong Acadian accent, "this is Père Le Loutre."

Roger started. The Otter! So! He had pictured the missionary as a tall, gaunt creature, roaming the forest in a cassock. The man before him might have been any Acadian farmer from the Bay settlements. Except for the eyes; the priest's monomania glittered there.

"Beau Soleil!" Le Loutre repeated, looking him up and down. "So you have stolen the name of Peyal, as well as his woman!"

It was clear that Koap had managed to conceal from the priest his acquisition of Wapke, fearful of sin, that mysterious thing for which the Micmacs had no word. Roger checked the retort on his lips and muttered in a surly voice, "The woman took me, a captive, and gave me the dead man's name in the custom of her people."

"Did she give you the pagan thing you wear at your throat?"

Roger's fingers went instinctively to the little stone fish. "That I found."

"*Scélérat!*" the priest cried. "You come to live in sin amongst these people and corrupt them with your English goods! It is a part of the English plot!"

"My goods are mostly French, *monsieur.* And if I live in sin, what of my good friend Gautier there, of whom you approve? Come, *monsieur,* let us be consistent! I am no English plotter—but if I were, is that worse than to come amongst these poor savages as a missionary of Christ and preach nothing but hatred and bloodshed?"

"Thieves! You have no right in Acadie, you English!"

"We are here by right of a treaty signed by

France nearly half a century ago, and by which we have abided. You and your Acadians are here by tolerance under that same treaty—which you have broken again and again, as well as the laws of God whom you profess to serve."

"You dare say that?" the madman cried in a strangled voice.

"I dare say that and more, *monsieur*. It is time someone told you these truths. Your hands are stained with blood, and your soul—you have no soul! You have involved the Acadian people in your crimes against God and man. Now there is a debt to be paid and the Acadians will have to pay it, for you will save your miserable skin, I do not doubt."

"What do you mean, infidel?"

Roger put his tongue between his teeth. It was a rich temptation to tell the man of the storm about to burst. But Le Loutre confounded him. A fanatical smile convulsed the narrow features.

"You mean this English venture against Fort Beauséjour? Pfui! One is aware of that! One has eyes, Monsieur Beau Soleil, and ears, in unexpected places! I have been gathering my savages and Acadians, and we shall entrap the English as they try to cross the Missaguash. They shall never get in cannon range of the fort. The good God fights for France, always for France!"

"*Le bon Dieu* may have changed his mind, *monsieur*."

"Infidel! The good God does not change his mind. But if he did, *bien*, I have used every means in my power to remove the Acadians beyond the tyranny of the English. Those imbeciles who stay must suffer the consequences of their own folly. I wash my hands of them."

The little black eyes blazed.

"Come, father," murmured Gautier, uneasily, seeing the twitch of Tom Fuller's fingers on the tomahawk at his belt. "The tide goes out of the river."

Abruptly the priest turned. They pushed off downriver without another word and in a few moments had vanished around the bend.

"Phew! There's a rum cove!" Tom observed. "Who might he be?"

Roger looked at the deserted chapel, the broken door, the fallen wooden cross. "Lucifer," he said.

THE Agent-Victualler of His Majesty's Navy at Halifax was a bony, blue-jawed man with ferret eyes.

"My name is Sudden," Roger said.

"I've heard of it," Joshua Mauger returned sourly. One of the irons he had in the provincial fire was a trucking trade with the Indians.

"You'll hear more from time to time," Roger assured him coolly. "But here's a matter we can work on together. Britain's at war with France, declared or not. So the North Atlantic fleet will rendezvous here this summer."

JOSHUA MAUGER

"What makes you think so?"

"Because that's what Halifax was built for. Now, a fleet must have supplies—and that's what you're here for. I have in mind the matter of beef."

Mauger smiled thinly. "I suppose you've picked up some cattle somewhere, Mr. Sudden. But have you any notion how much Admiral Boscawen will require? I'm afraid this is a matter beyond your resources, my enterprising young friend. I have arrangements to obtain beef in New England."

"At Boston prices, which shave your profits rather thin! The admiral holds you to the Halifax market price, isn't that the truth?"

"Suppose it is?" Mauger challenged.

"Admiral Boscawen will come from England provisioned for three months. That's usual, I believe. By September, when he leaves this coast, he must victual again. Now, you may call me a gambler if you wish, Mr. Mauger, but I'm ready to risk a substantial specie deposit that in three months' time I can supply you beef enough to victual the whole fleet."

"At how much the pound?" demanded Mauger.

"Fourpence! That will give you a profit of tuppence—twice what you'd get on New England beef."

"Halifax currency?"

"Sterling!"

"You mean barreled beef, of course?"

"Of course not. I mean fresh beef, dressed and ready for the barrel."

Mauger stared. "It will take two or three hundred tons of dressed meat—at least a thousand cattle."

"I know."

"How do you propose to make delivery?"

"At the town slaughterhouse. You can bring your salt and barrels there."

"And where do you propose to get the cattle?"

"That's my affair, sir."

"Humph! You can't buy from the Acadians. They sell all their beef cattle to traders from Quebec and Louisburg."

"Yes."

"You can't buy beef in Boston and deliver it in Halifax at fourpence the pound."

"True."

Mauger sucked in a long breath of annoyance. "You seem to be an energetic young man, and I've heard something of your success in the fur trade. But"—sharply— "you should stick to things you know, my friend. I can't afford to risk His Majesty's appointment on your mysterious supply.

"How large a deposit do you wish?"

"One thousand pounds sterling." Mauger smiled cynically as he said it.

"You shall have it in the morning. I shall require from you a sub-contract, signed and witnessed, acknowledging receipt of my deposit and warranting fourpence the pound, sterling, sixty days from delivery."

The ferret's eyes examined Roger fully half a minute.

"You've made a bargain, Mr. Sudden."

JOHN FOY had been drinking. Beads of boozy perspiration gleamed on his sallow brow. The pink coat, flung open, revealed a dribble of wine stains down his long white silk waistcoat. His stock was unfastened, his wig awry. His pale blue eyes were deeply bloodshot and the fleshy pouches beneath them had gathered in deep puckers that made him look ill as well as drunk.

"Look here," he said loudly, "you're overstepping our agreement. 'Twas no part of it that you should supply His Majesty's forces. I forbid it"—waggling a finger—"ab-so-lute-ly."

They were alone in the now familiar parlor. Halifax sweltered in the mid-June heat. The night was still and airless and through the open casements came the hot fetor of Hollis Street.

"Why?"

"That's no affair of yours, Sudden."

Roger fingered a silver bottle-screw lying on the table.

"I'll tell you why, Captain Foy. You're a paid agent of France. You were sent here for the sole purpose of espionage in the very beginning. Banker! But it's ingenious, damme, all of it! There's Rodrigues, whose business touches half the world. His little *cabinet* at Louisburg's a handy clearing house for information, isn't it? The spider in the web! Why, I even know some of the threads! Quite apart from you and Mary, there's charming Madame Ducudrai of the *Veritable Coucou*, who so adroitly questions the foreign sailors; and there's her husband, the dancing master—the chief French spy in New York. And there's that young fool, Roger Sudden, who thinks he's gathering information for commercial purposes . . . God's blood, Foy, did you think I was that blind?"

"I think you're mad, sir!" Sweat was streaming down the drunkard's face now. The pale eyes bulged.

"Mad or not, I can add two twos. I've wondered about you ever since we left the Thames. And when you became my 'banker' your thirst for information intrigued me mightily. I suspected, but I didn't care, really. I don't care now. I owe nothing to King George."

"I know that," Foy said eagerly.

"What you don't seem to realize is that I owe King Louis nothing, either. My loyalty belongs entirely to one Roger Sudden. And tomorrow morning Roger Sudden wants a thousand pounds in specie."

"You shall have it, Roger," in a whisper. "All of it, I swear!"

"Mary—"

"For God's sake say nothing of this to Mary!"

"Very well. We understand each other." Roger laughed without pleasure. "And now I've a bit of news you can pass on to your 'principal.' Beauséjour fell two days ago."

"Impossible!" Foy gasped. "The place has been invested a bare fortnight."

"A poor affair, truly," Roger said indifferently. "Monckton had to fight his way across the Missaguash, but after that the French simply shut 'emselves up in the fort. You can imagine the rest. Monckton set up mortars at his ease, a little way up the ridge. 'Twas like pitching coins into a hat at six paces—only Monckton was using twelve- and sixteen-inch bombs. The fort was in poor condition and when one of the bombs burst in a casemate and killed a few men, the garrison lost their courage. They were sadly outnumbered of course, and Louisburg was too far for hope of relief."

"What of Le Loutre?"

"Stole out and away, disguised as a woman. Droll, wasn't it? For rumor says the bishop of Quebec unfrocked the man some time ago. Was he one of your 'principals'?"

"Roger, I swear we— I never sent that cunning devil a word. I've never condoned his mode of warfare. I'm an old soldier, damme!"

"But you've been very useful to the French at Louisburg."

Foy drew himself up with drunken dignity. "I've striven to serve His Christian Majesty King Louis, in whose service I have the honor to hold a commission—like many another honest Jacobite, sir. Not all of us are able to forget the past, like you."

"That's why none of you has any future," Roger said.

ON THE last day of July, 1755, Halifax prickled with news of battle in the far Ohio woods, and the petty triumph of Beauséjour was washed away in a flood of gloom. "Braddock's defeat" was on every lip, always in a hushed voice, as if it bespoke the end of the world. A picked force of British regulars defeated, aye, slaughtered like sheep, by a handful of naked savages and *coureurs de bois*. Good God, what next? As if in answer came tales of a great French armament on the sea, destined for Louisburg, aye, for the final reckoning with Halifax.

The town was in a ferment of alarm and speculation. What of the defences? The palisade and its log forts were falling down. Governor Lawrence had built three or four small batteries of logs and earth along the waterfront, and of course there was the Eastern Battery, a simple picketed thing on the Dartmouth side; and the old battery on George's Island. All good enough against Indians or a venturesome privateer; but men who had seen the fortress of Louisburg spat in despair.

These tales of disaster and doom soon reached the Acadians of Fundy Bay, and Roger's traders reported a new defiance in them. When Governor Lawrence summoned thirty deputies from them and demanded for the last time a general oath of allegiance to the British king, they refused him flatly and went home. Roger had been called to the meeting as an interpreter and he returned to his lodging thoughtfully. All this chimed with a new arrogance amongst the Indians. The Otter was gone—had vanished utterly—but the policy he had preached so long now bore its fruit. The Micmacs were in slow but full migration toward the east end of the peninsula and Cape Breton, concentrated for the first time in their history, a striking force at last.

The French at Louisburg would not overlook so powerful a weapon in their hands. Nor could Governor Lawrence. And there were the English forts up-country surrounded by hostile Acadian villages, like stack-poles in a haymeadow in September, doomed at the first spark in the grass. That tough old bachelor in the Halifax residency would have to do something decisive, and quickly.

With this cold logic Roger soothed his own anxiety. He had gambled simply on the instincts of Lawrence after the fall of Beauséjour cleared the way to a final reckoning with the Acadians. He had been certain of the Acadians' attitude. He had not foreseen such strokes of fortune as the Braddock affair, with its far-reaching effect on British military minds, or the French armaments, real or fancied, now said to be gathering at Louisburg. Now all these men and things combined to make his gamble an absolute certainty.

It was confirmed in August when a smug letter from Apthorpe informed him that the *Fair Lady, Duke of Bedford* and *Sea Horse* were to take part in a mass deportation of the Acadians, beginning in September. "Poor devils but I suppose one should not Pity 'em. Some are for Louisiana but the general plan is to scatter 'em in small groups up and down the Sea Board from Massachusetts to Mexico where they can't do harm."

Roger set out at once for Fort Edward at Piziquid, and gathered there a band of select spirits, most of them former rangers. There was a time of waiting—and watching, for a spectacle now unfolded along the Fundy side from Fort Anne to Beauséjour and beyond. Companies of blue-coated New Englanders from Monckton's army had been quartered in the principal Acadian villages since mid-August, with a sprinkling of red-coats of the Fortieth. Suddenly, in the first days of September, they seized the Acadian men and boys, informed them of the order for their expulsion from the country, and carried them aboard the waiting ships. Women and children followed, while the troops put torch to house and barn. For weeks the Annapolis valley lay under a canopy of smoke in the warm September weather, and other smokes rose from Piziquid, Cobequid, Chignecto, from the farms along the isthmus and by the Petitcodiac.

It was amazing, now that it had come. The affair had an uncanny quality, so long foreseen, so swiftly and terribly accomplished. Roger felt as a prophet might, seeing the destruction of a world.

But there was work to be done. He set his men to gather the abandoned cattle, first at Grand Pré and gradually westward along the valley. In most cases the despairing Acadians had turned them loose toward the woods; but the soldiers had broken down the meadow fences and the hungry beasts came into the open and found their way to the vegetable patches and the fat green after-grass of the hay fields. Roger sent them down the winding road to Halifax in herds of fifty, each in charge of a pair of his rangers who jolted merrily along on the backs of scrawny Acadian ponies.

Now and then a provincial officer, brave in blue and scarlet, questioned his right to these spoils. He waved his contract with the Agent-Victualler under their noses, saying the cattle were for His Majesty's fleet and who the deuce were they to question it? The officers shrugged and said no more.

For various reasons Roger kept his men away from Beauséjour—now officially "Fort Cumberland"—and its marshlands. One reason was Colonel Monckton, that stiffly pipe-clayed regular, with his contempt for all colonials. Monckton had made a point of insulting the

Massachusetts officers and men; what would he not say to a cattle-hunting civilian? Another potent reason was the swarm of Acadians and Indians, led by skillful young Boishebert, who were making things very hot indeed for Monckton's destroying columns about the head of Fundy Bay.

"We're not here to fight," said Roger to his men.

But there was fighting for all that along the Annapolis valley and about the shores of Minas Basin, where parties of young Acadians had taken to the woods with musket and tomahawk. His herdsmen had several brushes with them in remote pastures and once or twice managed to take scalps, which they showed to Roger in high glee. He was surprised to find himself a little sick.

He hardened his soul at Grand Pré, the saddest scene of all, by walking past the black shell of the village to the slope where Noble's men slept their last sleep in shallow graves under the apple trees. It was easy there to call up the winter's night of '47 when Coulon's war party, guided from billet to billet by the Acadians themselves, had dragged the New Englanders from their beds and tomahawked them, bayoneted them, shot them down in their shirts. Dead men *did* tell tales. Now the harsh sequel was being written.

He shrugged and went his way.

CHAPTER XX

AGENT DE CONFIANCE

JOHN FOY stared at the neat figures on the sheet before him. They made an impressive little sum: Net profit, £8377, 1s, 3d.

"It's—it's incredible," he muttered.

"It's a fact, nevertheless," Roger snapped. "And a very good beginning, you'll agree."

"And an end, man, an end," returned Foy irritably. "You've supplied the fleet with three months' beef, enough to give Boscawen a final cruise in these waters and to take him home to England. What then?"

"He'll be back in the spring, Captain Foy—and the next spring, and the next. This is going to be a long war, a fight to the finish this time, make no mistake. Halifax and Louisburg, each with a powerful nation behind it, and an empire for the prize! Who takes Louisburg can take Quebec and all Canada with it. You told me that yourself, long ago. On the other hand, if the French can take Halifax they'll have Boston under their gun muzzles, and New York a step away. And here we are in the midst of it! Exactly placed to profit by it! Quite apart from the fleet, sir, you seem to forget His Majesty's forces in Nova Scotia. They eat beef, too—seven pounds per week per man. Now why must it come from Boston? Eh? Why should Messrs. Apthorpe and Hancock reap all the profit? They've had a monopoly of provisions ever since Halifax was founded because there was no other supply this side the water. But now, by Jove, there are fifty or sixty thousand cattle running loose about the ruined Acadian farms, and Lord knows how many sheep and hogs. I'm gathering 'em in large pounds near the better shipping places—Grand Pré, Piziquid, Cobequid and so on. There's plenty of fodder and I'll put up sheds to shelter 'em through the winter. Next summer—"

"Next summer you'll have competitors," suggested Foy drily.

"No doubt. I've had a little trouble with the Germans from Lunenburg, coming across country to forage on their own. I've complained to Mauger about that and he's putting a stop to it. And doubtless there will be a few New Englanders coming up the Bay next year to pick up what they can. They're welcome to what I leave."

"Who's to protect your cattle?"

"My man Tom Fuller and his lads—a brisk little company, Captain Foy. I've picked up good men wherever I could find 'em. A rough lot, but they suit me. D'you know what they call us in the mess-rooms at Fort Anne and the other posts along the Bay? Sudden's Wolves!"

He laughed, leaning back in his chair, and Foy looked at him sourly.

"Are you really so proud of these activities, Sudden?"

Roger let his chair come down with a thump. With all the black Sudden temper he jerked out, "Why not? Have you any notion how contemptible you seem to me?"

"Roger!" came Mary's voice, indignant, in the doorway. She swept into the chamber with a swish of quilted silk. "What do you mean?"

Foy's eyes rolled toward the ceiling. Roger hesitated, but only for a moment. Thought and tongue moved together adroitly and acidly.

"It's all of you," he dissembled. "You comfortable townspeople! The clothes you wear, the food you eat, the fuel you burn—all brought to you by men like me, who must risk their lives in some fashion to get it here. Why, your hoity-toity ladies and gentlemen daren't venture outside the palisade even now, except for the afternoon promenade toward Point Pleasant, under guard of a company of red-coats and paced by fife and drum! What a spectacle! It's the jest of every barrack in the province!"

"What touched off this explosion?" she asked suspiciously, and her glance fell on the sheet of figures. Foy's mouth sagged as she picked it up. There was a painful silence. Slowly she said, "So this is what it meant—all those cattle pattering through the streets and everyone saying they belonged to that remarkable young Mr. Sudden. I thought it a joke. Now I see!"

Her indignation flared. "You've been supplying Boscawen's fleet, Roger, and using our funds—funds that belong to France!"

"Mary!" Foy cried piteously.

She ignored him. She was superbly angry. Her eyes blazed green fire at the adventurer. "I don't care! Why shouldn't he know? You see, Roger, you who think of nothing but money, money, money! We hoity-toity Foys live in the shadow of the gallows, year in, year out, for nothing but our faith in France and the cause of our rightful king!"

The obvious retort curled on his lips but he checked it there. Instead he said soberly, "Has it occurred to you, Mary, that your faith in France may mean the death of many men whose faith is in King George?"

"Och!" she cried. "King George and his men were *sib* enough with death in the Highlands. Have you forgotten the road from Culloden so soon?"

"My feet are on a new road now," he answered gravely. "Why should I wring my neck with looking back?"

She put up that shapely chin of hers with a jerk that set the chestnut curls dancing. "Oh you—you *Englishman!*"

He could not help smiling a little, she sounded so very feminine and Scotch. She whirled about and marched, chin up, to the door, then turned. She addressed herself to Foy.

"You must dissolve—I think that's the word—dissolve this business with Mr. Sudden at once. He will refund the money we've advanced. It isn't much, in the light of his new prosperity."

"But, Mary!" Foy put out an imploring hand.

"Yes!" She stamped a silk-slippered foot imperiously. Her eyes glittered with angry tears. Roger gazed at her with admiration in his own, and she saw it, and flounced and was gone. The door slammed like a cannon.

FOY looked unhappy—more, the man was in a fright. He kept his bloodshot gaze on Roger's face and ran his tongue-tip back and forth across the doleful mouth. Roger stepped to the sideboard and poured half a tumbler of brandy for him. The spy drank it in a long gulp and the ripe Nantz made him splutter. He daubed at his lips and streaming eyes with a yellow handkerchief and took off his wig and mopped a head as bald and shining as an egg.

"My God!" he wheezed, "I'll have to do as she says."

"Don't take it so much to heart, man! Better to lose a client than a wife. Besides, I never liked the feel of your money, Foy. Tomorrow you shall have it to a penny. But if you think to sever all relations between me and Rodrigues et Fils, there I say no. Rodrigues is much too useful to me."

"But Monsieur Rodrigues—"

"Has a sound commercial instinct, like my own. What are these squabbles of states and kings to the march of commerce through the world? For men like Rodrigues and me, wars are merely opportunities. You have regular means of communication with Louisburg. I have not. So I'm afraid you must continue to act as go-between, whether it benefits His Most Christian Majesty or not."

"I see." Foy licked his lips again. "Brandy—the decanter, if you please. My thanks. Your health, sir!"

He tossed off another stout dram of brandy and drew a tortoise-shell snuffbox from his waistcoat, applying a pinch to each nostril with shaking fingers. "Ha! *Tcha!* Hum! There are certain—*tcha!*—things I must tell you, Sudden . . . for Mary's own sake, you understand. For myself I care nothing. I am old and disillusioned. She is young, romantic, infatuated with a shadow. She dragged me across the sea in pursuit of it. Give ear, now. Mary's the daughter of a Highland family impoverished by the '15—long before she was born. She grew up in an atmosphere of blind loyalty to the Stuarts. When she was fifteen the Chevalier came to the Highlands, and you know what it was like. Prince Charlie in his person embodied the Stuart cause for all of us. He was young and gallant, at home on the ballroom floor or in the field, a prince out of a fairly tale. Women went daft about him, old and young. Mary was no exception, though she saw him but twice—once at her father's house in the winter of '45, and after Culloden, for a moment only—he was flying for his life. She saw the wreck of the Highland army, her only brother in flight, her father's gardener dragged from his bothie and shot because he had a claymore on the wall."

Foy paused for breath. The brandy had loosened his tongue and the words fell from it in a spate.

"All that, you understand, made a desperate impression on a spirited girl in her teens. Her brother, James—ten years older than Mary and a very canny man—fled to England where he'd not be looked for. There he lay holed like a fox. To provide his escape, Mary journeyed to London and thence to Holland in the train of Lady Jean Douglas, with James in the guise of a manservant. They came to Paris, where I'd spent my life in exile since the '15. They—we were all part of that hopeful Scottish colony which lingered in Paris on the charity of King Louis. Then came that miserable treaty of Aix-la-Chappelle, where France agreed to expel the Chevalier in return for the fortress of Louisburg—a pretty bargain! That was the end for Prince Charlie and all of us. The charity stopped like that!" He attempted a snap of snuffy fingers and failed. "The Scottish officers were offered commissions in the

army of France, that was all. Most of them accepted, were sent to remote garrisons, vanished. James dallied in Paris—the wine, the pretty little ladies, all that. When he was down to his and Mary's last sou, he entered the Compagnies de la Marine and was ordered on foreign service, to Louisburg, the end of the world. Mary was afire to go, too. She was devoted to him, the douce elder brother, the bonnie companion and protector of her childhood, the gallant young soldier of the Chevalier. . . . Well, you see what I mean. She fair worships that scamp Jamie to this day. But he was bitter then, he was moody and aloof. He flung off to Rochelle and a ship for Cape Breton without so much as a 'God be wi' ye!' The puir lassie was heartbroken and alone. So she turned to me."

"I see!"

Foy mopped his brow again. His eyes avoided Roger's hard gaze. "I had no money, no influence. In any case I didn't want to leave Paris, where I'd lived in shabby comfort all those years. I was too old for military service in the colonies. But Mary kept at me to cross the sea, to be near that scapegrace Jamie, if not with him. And she wrote him letters, letters without a scratch of pen in return. Then one day in the spring of '49 there came a note from Jamie suggesting a post in the confidential service of France for Mary and me. I wanted no part in it, but Mary gave me no rest. Finally she went herself to Rouille, the Minister of Marine, and he offered me—us, because of our 'special qualifications,' this post we have. I was to go to London with Mary and join the expedition for Nova Scotia which the English government was advertising so boldly in the *Gazette*. We would become citizens of the new English fortress and I was to report to Louisburg everything that passed. In two or three years at most, Rouille suggested, France would be triumphant in America and we could remove to Louisburg or anywhere we pleased, with a rich reward. He was delicate. He didn't use that word 'spy', which comes off your lips so readily, my friend. *Agent de confiance,* that is what I am."

"One moment," Roger said. "Why tell me all this?"

"Because I want you to understand."

"You mean you're afraid!"

"For Mary, yes."

Roger made a mouth. Well, he had deserved it. "Rest easy then," he said stiffly. "I've always felt that Judas was a fool, selling his happiness for the price of a hang-rope."

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

"I don't understand myself, Captain Foy. I've never cared more than a snap of my fingers for women. I care less, now. And yet—I covet your wife."

A rush of blood darkened Foy's sallow cheek and the old swordcut stood out livid as lightning against a stormy sky. In his wide pale eyes Roger watched a flicker of emotions; doubt, suspicion, a puzzled alarm, a flare of anger, finally a glitter of malicious amusement. His lips writhed and then parted in a long cackle of laughter, and there he sat, head thrown back, wig on the floor, clothing disordered and splattered with brandy, a picture of Bacchus grown old and thin and daft.

Roger left him abruptly. As he stepped out of the chamber there was a *frou-frou* in the dark hall. He called, "Jenny!" but there was no answer. He groped for his hat and let himself out into the street.

"DIRTY cargo," Old Hux growled, and took the stubby black clay from his bearded lips to spit in the cold fireplace. "Besides, 'tain't like French rum and such-like that ye can land on old Mauger's beach at the harbor mouth and run up to town in small boats."

"I propose to bring the ship to my wharf."

Huxley stared. "With coals from Cape Breton? You *are* a bold 'un!"

"Not at all. I shall enter the coal as produce of this province."

"Pooh! His Majesty's customs officers ain't so blind as all that. The on'y coal in this part o' the world is up at Lingan in French territory."

"Wrong, Job, my friend. There's coal up the Bay of Fundy, sixteen miles this side of Fort Cumberland. I've seen it."

"On tide-water?"

"Yes. A place called Joggin. The garrisons of Fort Anne and Cumberland get all their winter coal there. They send up working parties, dig the stuff out of shallow pits and load it into sloops and brigs—just as the French do at L'Indienne."

"Then why not get your coals from Joggin, honest-like?"

"You know why. L'Indienne's only half the distance, and no lying on your beam ends at low tide as you must in the Bay. Besides, the French coal's better."

"Umph! Who's to dig your coal at Lingan—me?" Old Hux cocked a black and ironic eyebrow.

"Rodrigues will arrange that. For a few sous a day those poverty-stricken French *pecheurs* would dig coals in hell itself. The place is just around the headland from Glace Bay—you'll see the old blockhouse the English troops built to guard their working parties there in '46. A watch is kept in the blockhouse, and when wind and sea are right for loading, they hoist a pennant on the staff. You go in, take your hatches off, and the shore gang does the rest."

"S'pose I run afoul of a French man-o'-war?"

"That's a risk you must take anywhere in these times."

Huxley pulled at his beard. "Why not send the *Sea Horse* or that new brig ye bought this year, the *Venture*? Why me?"

"I'm sending all of you. I want at least two thousand chaldrons here before cold weather."

"'Od's heart! That's a lot o' coals!"

"With all Halifax for market? The townsfolk have cut all the firewood that's easy to get at. They're bringing it now in vessels from as far as Lunenberg. Last winter the price was twelve to twenty shillings the cord, this year it'll be twenty or thirty. Now a chaldron of good L'Indienne coal should give twice the heat in a cord of wood, and it takes far less storage room. I'll sell my coals at forty shillings the chaldron and they'll scramble to buy it."

"Zounds!" cried Old Hux. "Ye make the damned stuff sound like money itself."

"It's as good as gold in this climate, Job. I expect a profit of three thousand sterling at the very least, each winter."

Job Huxley sat back in the chair and admired his employer. "Ecod," he chuckled, "it's true what they say about ye, Roger—everything ye touch turns to money. Is it true ye've made fifty thousand quid just off beef to His Majesty?"

"In that and other ways. But go on!"

"Well, there's your big warehouse chock full o' goods, and your new wharf, and your truckhouses all over the province, your fur trade, your ships, your distillery, all out o' nothing in three years or so. What's your secret?"

Roger fingered his wine glass and smiled into the burgundy. "Would you really like to know?"

"'Od's blood, all Halifax 'ud like to know!"

Roger unfastened his stock and parted the ruffles of his cambric shirt.

Old Hux stared at the little stone fish. "That? In God's name, what is it?"

"A trinket I picked up in the woods. Its name is Good Fortune."

"And ye believe that?" Old Hux favored him with an incredulous leer.

"I only know that Fortune has smiled on me from the moment I hung it about my neck."

"Smiled!" said the ruffian coarsely. "She got into bed with ye, man! When do I sail for Lingan?"

"I'll have your stores aboard tomorrow morning. As soon after that as the wind serves."

"Ha! That means a fair wind as soon as the hatches are battened, if that heathen thing means half ye say."

"A good voyage, then."

"And a safe return," intoned Old Hux piously.

SWAYING through the town in a sedan chair in the early October dusk, Roger felt a certain agreeable complacency. Huxley's ribald compliment still tickled his ear. In three years his persistent wooing of the Golden Woman had yielded him in cash and property something like seventy thousand pounds. Indeed the flood of money had presented him with a pretty problem in investment.

Halifax had no trade, no opportunity, indeed no income but the bounty of King George—though that was rich enough; a city founded by decree and kept alive and vigorous by subsidies. Contractors like himself were able to batten on His Majesty with absurdly little capital, and their profits had to go abroad for interest. Thus Joshua Mauger had long been laying up treasure in England. For Roger, England seemed too far, the prospects dubious. He wanted his money under his nose. He began sending large sums to Rodrigues for investment in the shrewd Basque's vast and profitable enterprises, and was pleased to find a quick and sure return on all he cared to invest. The bulk of his fortune now was in Louisburg, safe and sound, and it pleased him to reflect that he had by proxy a considerable finger in the trade of the world.

In the meantime at Halifax the golden flood continued, indeed increased enormously, for the war went ill with England and the worried gentlemen at Whitehall were spending treasure in a panic to repair an army and navy neglected since '48. The Golden Woman had developed new and unexpected breasts, and more and more of them swayed within his reach. There was the encounter with Sally Madigan last spring, for instance. She had stopped her carriage in Argyle Street and beckoned him to her side.

"Things go well with you, Roger?"

"Yes, Sally," he had said pleasantly, biting off an instinct to return the compliment.

Sally's lover, the major, was now on Governor Lawrence's staff and a power in the land.

"Why don't ye go in for army and navy contracts?"

He had pursed his lips. "They're pretty much in the hands of Mauger and Saul and Butler. I've had a good share, of course."

"It's time ye had a better! I'll speak to Major O'Rourke."

"That's very good of you, Sally. But why trouble your pretty head about me?"

Her blue eyes had twinkled. "Well, you're the best-lookin' bachelor in Halifax and one o' the richest. Got every miss—japers, and half the married women!—pantin' for a soft word or a touch o' your hand. Faith, and ye're not afraid to step up to my carriage in the broad o' day, in the most fashionable street in the town, and stand with your hat doffed as if I was the finest in the land—"

"Who says you're not?" he had retorted, laughing and putting a quick hand to his hanger-hilt.

"Ah, that's what I like about ye, Roger—ye don't care a tinker's dam for anyone. It's a good thing I love my old Tim. But that's not

why I want to help ye with the contracts. D'ye remember that evenin' on the hillside when ye gave me your last sixpence? That's it, Roger."

He had smiled and said, "That little rhyme you sang—'Four-and-twenty blackbirds . . .'"

She had tipped her nose disdainfully and cast a blue glance along the "most fashionable street."

"I still think it's a dainty dish to set before the king, seein' what it's cost him so far. Mother of God! They've poured enough gold down these filthy gutters to build a new Jerusalem. And this year—keep a close tongue on it, Roger—there's an army comin' under Lord Loudoun, regiments *and* regiments. and the good yellow guineas flowin' like wather. Well, see that ye get your full share of it, darlin'—and God bless ye!"

Within a week the commissaries had come to him in a quaint mixture of bewilderment and respect, and offered him what must have seemed to them the moon and stars. Roger had accepted, with a nonchalance that left them gasping, and busied himself laying in great stocks of war supplies, from ship-bread to gunpowder.

In the early summer Lord Loudoun had come to conquer Louisburg with his army and Lord Holborn's fleet; a windy man, concealing his doubts and fears and ineptitude in a thundering pomposity that deceived no one. Roger and the little coterie of contractors waxed rich. For Loudoun's army had not budged from Halifax but sprawled all summer in tents on the Citadel slopes and common and upon the low ridge to the southwest which now went by the name of Camp Hill, drinking too much rum and eating too little fresh provisions and sickening of scurvy, smallpox and the bloody-flux. Loudoun had set them planting cabbages against the scurvy, and toward the season's end, alarmed by secret information of a great French armada at Louisburg, he had taken them off to New York again without stopping even to dig their crop.

Now it was autumn and, as Roger's chairmen turned the corner of Duke Street and dived downhill toward the Great Pontack Inn, he could see the lantern glimmers of Holborn's ships in the harbor. The sailor, more bold than Loudoun, had cruised off Cape Breton well into September, only to be caught in a hurricane on a lee shore. He had clawed off somehow and brought his shattered ships to Halifax, and now was refitting feverishly—"and hang the expense, sir!"—for a return to England. Next year they and Loudoun's army would come back again and there would be another fiasco for the amusement of the French and the enrichment of the Halifax contractors.

Roger's mind turned on the prospect. There was money in masting. This winter he must send a gang to cut masts up the Bay of Fundy somewhere—the pines grew very straight and tall in those parts. Bring 'em around the coast to Halifax in the spring. A stiff price and a certain market with a big fleet on this windy shore. And why not export as well? Good masts and spars were precious things in England nowadays. Write London and find out the prospects. . . And the matter of ship-bread. Why not build a bakery and undertake the supply of biscuit when the fleet came on the coast? Something there! Indeed, why not supply the troops as well? Loudoun's thousands, not to mention the garrisons of Halifax and the chain of forts up Fundy way. Ecod!

Mauger wouldn't like it, of course, and Mr. Saul would look down his long nose and grumble about a gentlemen's agreement—they were importing ship-bread stale from Boston and charging famous prices. But hang Mauger and hang Saul! As for beef, Tom Fuller and his lads were finding plenty of Acadian cattle still. Having to fight for it sometimes—that French fellow, what was his name?—Boishebert. A damned nuisance. Clever, though. If Boishebert ever got his Quebecois bush-fighters and the Indians and refugee Acadians rallied en masse there'd be the deuce to pay in Nova Scotia!

In the meantime cattle were still coming down the Valley road. He was salting the beef himself now and selling it in cask for the full profit. He had got as high as three shillings the pound for salt provisions to Loudoun's troops. The look on Mauger's face! And Mauger's sour prediction, "Some day, young feller, you'll over-reach yourself." Music!

And now here was the Great Pontack, the pride of Halifax, named for Pontack's famous club in London. The windows blazed with candles for the farewell rout for Holborn's officers—common tallow in the less important chambers and the Long Room glowing like a lantern with the best of spermaceti.

A POWDERED Negro in blue coat and white silk breeches took Roger's hat and cloak and sword-cane and he passed inside, into the glitter and hubbub of fashionable Halifax at play. There was pretty stuff here, wives and daughters of the garrison officers and the leading merchants; not their Sallies, though—he saw O'Rourke alone.

There was Governor Lawrence, the unbending bachelor, now bending very gallantly over pretty hands. A tall and powerful figure, a heavy face florid with the effort of the last dance, pleasant enough at the moment but not the face of a man to be crossed lightly. The poor stupid Acadians had found that out. And there was Bulkeley, at forty still looking more the handsome dragoon than the plodding Provincial Secretary. He had just married young Amy Rous, and Roger moved across the floor to congratulate him, aware of many eyes and

an acidulous female voice cutting the din with, "There goes that young Midas, Roger Sudden. Why don't he marry some nice gal and play the gentleman?"

Bulkeley acknowledged Roger's felicitations pleasantly and drew him aside. "How is it, Sudden, that you always know where money's to be had?"

"What is it now?" parried Roger cautiously.

"His Majesty's Dockyard. We've got a careening wharf and one or two buildings, but there's need of a sail loft, a masting pond, a hospital, and heaven knows what besides—all to be built next year. And what do we find when we search out the title of the land we want? That some was granted to Captain Gorham, that ranger man, and the rest to one Roger Sudden, as far back as '49! Are you in league with the devil? And how much d'ye want?"

"I'm afraid you'll have to extend the dockyard in the other direction, Captain. I don't want to sell. My distillery—"

"Oh come, Sudden! Your distillery's only a mask for the rum you smuggle in from Louisburg. How dense d'ye think I am?"

Roger looked in the secretary's eyes and saw something cool behind the smile. Bulkeley was incorruptible, the only incorruptible in Halifax, barring Governor Lawrence himself.

"How much d'ye want for it?" Bulkeley depeated. "You and the devil!"

"Five thousand pounds," Roger said.

"You're joking, Sudden, of course. Be serious, man! These patched-up ships of Holborn's show the need of a proper dockyard if we're to wage a war against the French in these waters. And things have gone deuced badly everywhere—"

"Three thousand," Roger said.

"Surely you'll make it two?"

"Three," he insisted coldly.

"Very well!" A twist of anger on Bulkeley's tongue. "Your patriotism, sir—"

"Is exceeded only by my sense of money's worth, Captain Bulkeley."

They parted, too politely. I've made another enemy, Roger thought, and did not care. Those who sought the Golden Woman could waste no time with incorruptibles.

ROGER ran a dark glance over the women. They did not seem so charming now—was it the taste of money in his mouth? Lean old and fat old; horse-faced but sometimes handsome middle-aged; vapid young faces and some clever ones.

His roving glance found a patch of green in this desert and halted there. She, of course. No other woman could wear that color as if it belonged to her, and few would have dared those sharply narrowing hoops which shaped the silk like a pagoda roof, rising in a series of flounces from a wide and sweeping hem to beautiful hips which were her own. There were prettier women in the room, but none more shapely or more self-possessed, and she was surrounded by ardent young naval and military gentlemen wriggling like puppies about a dish. Something she said in her light voice set them all in a gale of laughter that shook them apart a little, and Roger's gaze met hers.

The Long Room of the Pontack was not very long and certainly not wide. And at this moment, in one of those silences that come upon a crowded company like a bolt from the gods, smiting all tongues at once, her voice was heard saying clearly, "There's that mysterious man, Sudden. Do bring him over, someone. I want to see if he bites."

In the stillness, in that sea of stares, she made a *moue* and brought the closed fan up to her lips. One or two of her admirers moved to carry out her wish, but Roger was crossing the floor already. There was nothing else for him to do.

He was furious. As young Barry of the Forty-fifth stuttered an introduction, he bowed over her hand with a chill politeness. Then the governor's voice cried in the silence, calling for another dance, and all the tongues began to clack again, the pianoforte tinkled, the fiddles wailed, the chamber frothed with petticoats and nimble legs. She dismissed the young men to their duties and after a moment, in the privacy of the very commotion about them, murmured in Roger's ear.

"I must talk to you. Away from here."

"Your house?" he asked doubtfully. Since the night of her angry dissolution of their partnership, he had visited Foy in Hollis Street rarely—never when she was there.

"No"—quickly—"John's well set on an evening's drinking, he may take home some of his friends. I'll come to your home."

"Is that discreet?" he asked.

She shrugged, smiling brilliantly for the benefit of passing eyes. "I confess I'm devoured with curiosity, Roger. One hears that you have a little mansion in the outskirts—on the track they call Pleasant Street, isn't it?—attended by blackamoors and surrounded by high stone walls. In fact, one hears all sorts of tales—some that you're a Bluebeard, and some that you're a monk. Some call you Young Hunks the Miser and others swear you're lavish to the poor—especially the London emigrants."

"We can't leave the assembly together."

"Of course not! You'll disappear in the next few minutes—it's well known you only attend these affairs out of policy. And after the next dance I shall plead a megrim and have my chair called. If I go home by way of Pleasant Street, who's to know?"

"You're being very rash," he warned.

"With you?" she retorted impishly, and dismissed him with a flick of her fan.

CHAPTER XXI

THE VESTAL AND THE FLAME

ROGER had built the house for a number of reasons, not the least being a desire to get away from the Trope lodging with its eternal reek of boiled codfish and the faint yet unmistakable air of squalor which the ape-faced Lumley woman had brought with her somehow from Tooley Street and imposed upon the "genteel furnishings" of her Halifax establishment. He required a place apart from his too-public countinghouse where he could consult men of devious affairs, of smuggling affairs especially, and so the site had been dictated by the need—Pleasant Street, on the ridge south of the town proper and hard by the tumbledown palisade, where Old Hux and the others could slip in quietly from boat landings on the Point Pleasant shore. And it satisfied an instinct for a roof of his own, a retreat where he could keep some choice wines and brandies and gather a few books, with comfortable furniture and perhaps, later on, a horse or two and dogs.

Not that his old vision of a return with riches to Suddenholt had lost a whit of its savor. After eight years that was stronger than ever. Like any Englishman abroad, like hundreds of them in this unlovely wooden town, the word "home" meant for him one thing alone, and four walls and a roof on the wrong side of the ocean could not take its place. But something in him demanded a payment on account.

Hence the "mansion," a modest thing in all truth—two stories and a garret of pine clapboards with a steep shingled roof. It was set well back from the highroad in a garden made of earth carted from the woods, the whole surrounded by a high wall of field-stones topped with broken glass, and approached by a forbidding iron gate. His servants he had bought of Mauger, who had dealt in black ivory in his West Indian days and still manned all his ships with Negroes. Tall and very ugly men and very black, indeed, they spoke a jargon of English, Martinique French and pure African—and understood Roger very well. Their names, Quashie and Brass Pot. The loneliness of the house, the uncompromising wall, the huge blacks, the wild men in buckskins who called by day and the mysterious visitors who came by night, the enigmatic owner himself, all these had set the tongues of Halifax a-wagging.

He awaited Mary with a rather brittle patience in the chamber where he received all his visitors, a plain apartment paneled in hard maple and furnished with a Turkey carpet, a desk, a round table of black walnut, a small Dutch-footed sofa from Philadelphia and three or four New England chairs. A musket and a fowling piece lay over the mantel upon the horns of caribou he had shot himself. The panels were decorated with hung pieces of Indian dyed quill-work, a pair of crossed snowshoes, a curiously carved powder horn taken in a brush with Boishebert's men, a shot pouch made of a human scalp with a design in red and blue beads. A rack of pipes hung by the fireplace with a bark box of tobacco beneath. A wooden corner-bracket supported a painted plaster figure of Saint Joseph from the ravished Acadian chapel at Grand Pré.

A fire of split birch flamed upon the hearth. The man Brass Pot had drawn the heavy velvet curtains and placed a two-branched candelabrum on the table. Roger bade him fetch sweet biscuits, glasses and a decanter of the best claret. The big Negro wrinkled his brows for a moment. He was used to bringing rum and snuff for visitors. He departed and was about to enter the chamber with the unusual refreshments when the gate groaned on its hinges and a light quick step came up the walk. Roger motioned him to put the tray down and depart. He went to the door himself.

Her tall figure was wrapped in a blue cloak with a hood thrown over her hair. She put the hood back as she entered his chamber and looked about her in frank curiosity. He found himself nodding in approval. Most women would have gone into the vapors at the mere notion of coming to this house of dark rumors.

"So this is where you live, Roger!" She went on with her inspection, seeking, he suspected, some sign of other women.

"Do sit down," he murmured, putting forward his most comfortable chair. She sank into it with that lithe grace of hers and laid the cloak aside, probing her chignon and its fall of curls with her slim fingers in the charming gesture which women make so artlessly and so disturbingly. Her apparent self-possession piqued him a little.

"Well?" he said.

She turned her face to him, saying nothing for a minute, looking full into his eyes.

"Roger, would you think me very bold or very mad if I asked you to take me in your arms and kiss me?"

A flush crept up her throat and stained her face as she said it. Something within him, the old Roger of the continental days, dead and buried all this time, leaped alive at the familiar invitation. Yet his harsh tongue found the word it never could say then. "Why?"

"Because!" She heard his cluck of tongue at that silly womanism and added in a little rush, "Because it would be so much easier then to say what I have to say."

He brooded on that, all the cynic in him suspicious and alert. "Once—do you remember that night in the Downs, Mary?—I misunderstood a mood of yours and paid the penalty. What mood is this?"

"Ah!" she cried, sitting straight in the chair

"Roger, would you think me very bold or very mad if I asked you to take me in your arms and kiss me?"

and regarding Saint Joseph, all scratched where the rough New Englanders had thrown him down on the day of the expulsion. "That was so long ago—and I didn't know you, I didn't know you! I didn't want to be touched, by you or anyone. To be touched was horrible, except in the way of ordinary politeness. From my childhood it was like that to me—I can't explain—like snakes or toads. I had to leap back and strike. Does that seem very strange?"

"It seemed strange," he said brutally, "in a woman who presumably had known the kiss-and-tumble of the marriage bed."

Her lips went white. "You don't understand. My husband—"

"Are you going to suggest that your husband never touched his wife, like Saint Joseph over there?"

"Please—please don't speak like that, Roger! I'm trying to tell you that a woman like me must have time to see and learn and know a man . . . to love him."

"You don't mean that you've learned to love me?" he said, incredulous.

She looked at the tip of her shoe and said in a low voice, "I'm saying that I wish to be loved. I've never been truly loved in my life . . . and I'm twenty-seven, Roger."

She turned to him then her proud face in its frame of ruddy hair, the moving lips, the fine-carved nostrils with their eager upward tilt, and slowly she rose and came to him. She was as tall as he, and when she flung her arms about his neck her eyes came close and were enormous, ardent, inviting, promising, yet with some quality reserved, a challenge of hidden strength like the green depths of a sea pool on a summer afternoon. He felt a wayfarer's hot and dusty urge to plunge. His arms slipped about her and found her warm and pliant in their embrace. She closed her eyes and offered a mouth alive with passion, fear, prayer—he did not know and did not care. He was aware of a triumph, feeling once more that leaping belief in himself and the little totem which had brought so many treasures to his feet.

SHE drew her lips away at last with a small gasp as if for breath. Her eyes opened with mingled emotions in them, shy and bold—and inquisitive.

"It's been a long time," Roger said, and felt himself trembling.

"Only a little time more," she whispered. "I promise you that."

He said carefully, "John . . . "

She flushed and lowered her eyes. "He will return to France. He was never happy away from Paris."

"You've discussed this with him?"

"Yes"—simply.

He was astounded and a little chilled. He was not afflicted with morality, it was the banality of the thing; the elderly spouse, the young wife and the lover—the oldest jest in all the taverns of the world. He did not feel sorry for Foy, that sot. He felt that Foy had taken advantage of the girl's loneliness in Paris and of her *idée fixe*. That! Was that obsession of hers a part of—this? He demanded abruptly, "Which means most to you, Mary, your hatred of England or your love for me?"

It stung, for she returned with spirit, "Which do you love most, Roger Sudden, your money or me?"

A neat retort, and because he could not answer it he snapped churlishly, "What makes you think I love you at all?"

"Ah, now you're angry, Roger! You sound as you did that night in the Downs. How difficult you are! But I know you love me. Long before we reached Nova Scotia in the *Fair Lady* I knew that—it was in your eyes whenever you looked at me, all that long voyage. I don't think you knew it yourself, then. But I did—and yet I knew it could mean nothing to me. I put it from my mind, though it tore my heart when you were taken by the savages; and all that long time afterwards, the waiting and the scheming for France that seemed to have no end, the false life that we lived—as if life in this place were not misery enough! When you came back I was glad, but all my thoughts had fastened themselves upon the cause of King James and the wrongs of the Highlands—and my brother fretting his heart away alone in Louisburg. And you—your eyes were different, Roger. You were hard and cruel. All you wished to talk about was money. We were oceans apart then, you and I. Then one night in Hollis Street I overheard you telling John you wanted me. I went to bed and wept, for happiness, yes, and for sadness, because I was quite sure I couldn't bring myself to do what I'm doing now. Then came that quarrel over your supply contract, and all was over. You never came to the house when I was there. And I was too proud to put a foot toward you when I saw you in the town. How we've tortured ourselves!

"Tonight when you entered the Long Room all those young and old fools and their compliments seemed like a chatter of apes. I hadn't even seen you come in, yet I knew. When I looked across the room I seemed to see the message I wanted in your eyes, and I knew you belonged to me and no other, and I to you—after all this time consumed in other things. And so—I've come to you. And you ask me which is stronger, love or hate!"

"What are we to do?" he muttered, amazed and strangely helpless. How long was "only a little time more"?

Her eyes danced. "*Och, mo chridhe,* don't you see how simple it all is now? We've had our triumphs, you and I. You've grown rich—surely you must be satisfied? And I've seen, after all this time, the failure of a great English expedition through my efforts—mine! For it was I who warned Louisburg in time, I who suggested that a French ship fall into Holborn's hands with despatches that 'revealed' the size of De la Motte's fleet! It frightened Loudoun half to death and kept him here at Halifax, planting cabbages and watching his army go to pieces with sheer idleness. Loudoun, that man—that Campbell! Of all people! What a revenge for Scotland! I feel awed, my Roger, when I think how that fox of Skye was given his English rank—given this very command in

America—for his services against Prince Charlie in the '45. And heaven put him in my hands! All the world's laughing at the great John Campbell, Baron Mauchlane, Earl of Loudoun, defeated by a scrawled lie in a barrel of French fish!"

She had swayed her chestnut head back, resting her eager hands upon his shoulders. Her face was alight, she was laughing with the world. She was beautiful in this ecstasy, but he was uneasy and a little shocked. With such a passion in her, was there really room for love?

He said, "I feel as if I were seducing a vestal."

She stiffened and said in an odd voice, with color staining her cheeks, "What ever made you say that?"

"This sacred flame you keep."

A silence. Then, reproachfully, "You were eager enough once—have you forgotten? Do you remember what you said of women then?"

"I was young and a fool then."

She looked astonished and indignant. "Roger Sudden, are you telling me you've grown too old and wise to want me now? After I've flung myself at your head?"

"I'm telling you I love you, and I wish—"

"Roger! Oh, Roger!" Her voice quaked and her eyes went very wide. "Why didn't you say that before? Why didn't you *say* it? Don't you understand? I thought you wanted . . ."

A sound toward the road, the rattle of a stick on iron. Flustered, she cried, "There's my chair at the gate—I must go." She whirled the cloak about herself and stepped into his arms.

"Kiss me, a long kiss, Roger, for I shan't see you again till you come to Louisburg."

"Louisburg?"

"Yes. You've always intended to remove to Louisburg, haven't you? Isn't that why you've sent the great part of your fortune to Rodrigues? We go tonight, *a ghaoil mo chridhe,* in a smuggler's sloop. John says we are suspected at last and must run. Now do you see? Do you see why I had to come and bare my heart to you tonight? Kiss me and swear you'll come to me soon!"

He put his hard mouth to her eager one and clutched her against him desperately, as if her supple person were the one thing certain in a suddenly risen sea of perplexities, while her chairmen beat a tune upon the gate outside.

CHAPTER XXII

ENTER A GHOST

JOSHUA MAUGER'S predatory fingers picked at the sheet of paper and poised a quill. "A gentlemen's bargain, good round figures, Mr. Sudden. Two thousand for the wharf and warehouse—too much, you know, those spruce piles don't stand water-rot like good red pine. One thousand for the merchandise, including coals, now in the warehouse and the fuel yard adjoining. Three thousand for the truck-houses up country with all goods and chattels and all furs in transit—you're to notify your factors of the change in ownership at once. Two thousand five hundred for the ships and all spare cordage, sails and stores, excepting and reserving the *Fair Lady,* snow. Um! I make it eight thousand, five hundred pounds."

"Guineas."

"Oh? Oh! You drive a hard bargain, my young friend."

"You're getting a flourishing business at the price of dirt and you know it, Mauger. I want specie, please."

"Oh, come, Mr. Sudden! Where should I lay hands on so much currency so quickly? A bill of credit on London, now—or Amsterdam, say—"

"Specie! Boscawen's fleet is in the harbor and the army's here again, pouring guineas across every counter in the town. Besides, you're the wealthiest man in Halifax—that's why I came to you. I set my prices low for good hard money and that's what I want."

The ferret's eyes regarded him curiously. "If you insist, Mr. Sudden." What an oily voice the fellow had! And softly, "Would you mind telling me, Mr. Sudden, why you're selling out now, of all times? It isn't like you, with all these opportunities."

"I'm sick of shaking the guinea tree."

Mauger smiled slyly. "Do you expect me to believe that, Mr. Sudden?"

Roger's tongue coiled in his cheek. The long contest of wits with Mauger had been meat and drink to him, and there was a sour taste of surrender in selling out just when the Golden Woman seemed to present her very choicest charms. And yet—and yet it might prove the greatest coup of all, if Louisburg won the coming summer's battle. All the news from Europe told of British incompetence and defeat, a state of affairs well demonstrated in the new world by Lord Loudoun. Old Hux said the streets of Louisburg were full of veterans from France, and the French fleet had arrived on the coast again, commanded by Des Gouttes this time instead of old Bois de la Motte. Another fiasco like last summer's campaign and the French would be in Halifax.

True, this new expedition in the harbor seemed larger and better equipped than any British force yet seen in America, but most of the regiments were fresh out from garrison towns in England, the very worst material for a war in the Nova Scotia wilds; and many of Boscawen's ships had been shattered on this coast last year and patched anew, and eighteen of his captains had served under Holborn in that infamous affair. Loudoun had been re-

placed by Jeffrey Amherst in the supreme command, a man who had never seen America. All the signs pointed to a disaster worse than any yet suffered by British arms in a war of disasters. It would be something, Roger mused, to see the look on Joshua Mauger's face when all this came about.

He said with an elaborate indifference, "I told you—I'm tired. But if you want a better answer, why, I've gathered the fortune I set out to seek and now I propose to enjoy it while my health and thirst are sound."

"In England, I dare say?"

"Eventually, yes."

He was surprised to see the wily eyes turn dreamy for a minute. "Ah! That's what I intend to do myself some day. After this campaign, perhaps. England! A house in London, a place in the country, buy a seat in parliament and play the gentleman. All my life I've dreamed of that." He blinked and opened his eyes on Roger and the present. "When do you leave, Mr. Sudden?"

"I'm not sure. A week or a month, perhaps."

"Ah, then we'll see more of you before you go. You are a remarkable young man and we shall miss you very much." The oily smile again. "And now, here is the agreement of sale, and the pen."

With the quill in his hand Roger paused. "This clause—'full payment of which is hereby acknowledged'—I don't quite like that."

"Ah, my dear Mr. Sudden, what a question to raise! A common business formality, as you surely know. The specie will take some days to collect. It shall be delivered within a week, you have my word. A matter between gentlemen." But seeing the doubt still in Roger's eyes. "After all, Mr. Sudden, you're a man of influence in Halifax, you have friends in high places. If I were a rogue, at least I am not a fool!"

Roger signed without further ado. But he refused Mauger's notion of wine and "a toast to our mutual advantage," pleading other urgent matters, and walked out breathing a sigh of relief. There was a taint in air that Mauger breathed.

It was Maytime and Halifax basked in sunshine under a blue spring sky. The grass was fresh and green at the sides of the less traveled streets and on the broad flank of Citadel Hill, but the hardwood ridges on the Dartmouth side still wore the dun tint of winter. A breathless air hung over Halifax and the leafless countryside, the deep pause of the earth itself before flinging into summer like a woman into the arms of a lover. The throng of ships in the roadstead and the swarms of redcoats ashore gave that breathlessness another and sharper significance. All America, aye, and Europe, waited like this, watchful and motionless, for the flowering of this struggle in the northern wilderness.

The hubbub of English voices in the streets was like old days in '49 before the advent of the Germans and New Englanders. Some of them were Kentish—Kentish as the chime of Canterbury bells. He resisted an urge to stop and ask if any were from Suddenholt way. But now rose a sound of music wild and high, fantastic on this side the sea. It brought people running from the houses and halted Roger like a shout. Along Barrington Street, forerun by a rabble of delighted urchins, came the skirl of bagpipes and a gallant rattle of drums. Astounded, he beheld a regiment marching past in short red coats and waistcoats, in kilt and plaid, in blue bonnets with scarlet pompons, in diced red-and-white stockings.

The spring sunshine glinted on musket and broadsword and the long Lochaber axes of the sergeants. Leather sporrans danced and kilts swung to the ordered thrust of hairy knees, the quick, springy step of men of the hills—Frasers, by the plaid. What were they doing here in the forbidden Highland dress, in those red jackets, with the hateful *G.R.* stamped upon their cartridge-boxes? Frasers, fighting for King George?

He turned away abruptly as a prophet might turn from a chosen people gone to Baal. Good God, what next! The lilt of the pipe-tune mocked him all the way to Pleasant Street, with his feet falling instinctively into the march step and memories whirling through his head. In this state he entered the chamber hung with tokens of his new life and found Tom Fuller awaiting him.

THE sight of Tom was like a breath of the forest. Years on the narrow trails had given him the look, and even the pigeon-toed walk, of an Indian. He was dark and gaunt and the fringed buckskin seemed to be a part of him.

Only his speech and the scarred hand recalled the seaman of the Rochester road. The savages, fascinated by that twisted but powerful hand, had given him a long name meaning Bosoley's Claw. They had felt that claw in many ways in the past few years.

"I got your letter—and the money," Tom said in a dull voice.

Roger avoided his eyes. It had seemed so easy to put his farewell in a letter. He might have known that Tom would come and face him with it.

"I've made my fortune, Tom. There seems no reason to stay on."

"But," protested Tom, "a-partin' company like this, sir, arter all we've seed and done together!"

"It had to come to this, old friend. You wouldn't like it where I'm going, and besides, you've wandered long enough. Take the money home to England and buy an inn down Kent

way somewhere. That old affair's forgotten now. Some day I'm going home to Kent myself. You'll find me then at Suddenholt, and we'll have many a good glass together and talk of these wild times."

"Is it—is it a woman, sir?"

"Yes."

Tom made a mouth and nodded slowly, a philosopher in buckskins. "I see. 'Tain't nothin' to be said, then. But I'm glad. 'Tain't natteral for a man to sheer off women all the best part o' his life—not a man like you, sir, that a woman 'ud give 'er 'eart to, quick as a wink." He added dourly, "I on'y hope she's worth it, damme!"

Brass Pot brought rum and lemons and they drank to eternal fellowship and the meeting in old Kent.

"Till then!" said Tom, at parting. "If the war spares me as well as you."

"What d'you mean?"

"Me and the lads is a-goin' into a reg'ment o' rangers that the gov'nor's raisin' for the new campaign."

"What! Why?"

"'Cause we're sick an' tired o' seein' things go from bad to worse, sir!" Tom burst out savagely. "Ever since the old ranger companies was disbanded, barrin' Gorham's, there's been no safety for settlers outside the forts. Boishebert's war parties range the whole province. Even our troops can't pass along the Annapolis valley 'cept in large parties and well armed. The gov'nor's had to give up his pet settlement down Cole Harbor way. Last year a war party come down the old canoe trail from Shubenacadie and killed some inhabitants at Dartmouth—a thing they ain't tried in a long time. Why, last summer a party o' seamen got scalped in the woods at Point Pleasant, right under the nose o' Loudoun's whole army! An' them poor Dutch at Lunenburg live in hell the whole time, day an' night. Well, all that . . . that's why."

He stuck out the scarred right hand and Roger shook it hard. There was a lump in his throat. The seaman's hard gray eyes were saying something that his loyal tongue withheld. Does he know? Roger wondered.

The door closed and the iron gate clanged dismally.

He dined alone, eating little but drinking Madeira in a way that made the eyes of Brass Pot bulge. Afterwards he wandered up and down the chamber, hands in breeches, while the long May twilight faded slowly into darkness. A black mood settled on him like the night itself. His two selves were at war again. Good and evil? Perhaps. But which was which? One could not wait for a sight of Louisburg and Mary Foy. And surely that was the end of the road he had followed all this time, the way to love and fortune? Two insisted, Stay. But why? he asked. What was here now?

Roger drew up a chair to the hearth, staring into the flames for a glimpse of Mary's face, conjuring a memory of her strange, flecked eyes which always had golden glints in such a light as this. But all he could hear was the pipe-tune in the streets, and all he could see was Tom Fuller and the look in Tom Fuller's eyes. Doubt, doubt! Just when he had been certain of his destiny!

I must be very drunk, he thought.

There were sounds outside, a rat-tat on the stout front door, an altercation of some sort in the hall, and finally the flinging open of the chamber door itself. He sprang up crying, "What the deuce—" and saw Captain Bulkeley standing there in a cloak and laced hat and looking as dour as death.

"Sudden," the tall secretary said, "you must come with me at once."

"Why?"

"The governor wishes to see you."

"I'm afraid I have other plans for this evening, Captain Bulkeley."

"I'm afraid you must give 'em up. My carriage is outside."

"I don't like your manner, sir. One would think he was under arrest."

The Irishman's eyes flashed in the firelight. "You are, sir! You are!"

Roger stared beyond the man and saw a sergeant's halberd gleaming in the hall. There was a shift of other feet outside.

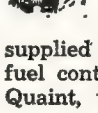
Without further word, he passed the trembling Brass Pot into the night, seeing faintly in the hazy starlight the forms and dully gleaming musket barrels of the sergeant's guard. Bulkeley addressed the sergeant curtly.

"Stay and arrest anyone who attempts to enter or leave."

The carriage lurched along Pleasant Street, down the stony drop of Sackville Street and along Granville to the governor's house. The new residency stood ghostly and unfinished in the flicker of the chaise lamps; the fashionable world of Halifax was fitting costumes and counting the days toward a grand housewarming ball. The old residency, that relic of '49, sat small and shabby in the corner above Market Square. It was headquarters now for the expedition, and every window blazed.

The guard turned out and presented arms as Bulkeley stepped from the chaise. He and Roger passed inside. Bulkeley left his prisoner in an anteroom jammed with orderlies from a dozen regiments. He reappeared in a moment.

"This way, Mr. Sudden, please."



ROGER found himself in the large presence of Governor Lawrence. The door closed quietly. They were alone. A coal fire glowed in an iron basket on the small hearth—coals supplied by Roger himself under that lucrative fuel contract which now belonged to Mauger. Quaint, that—the commander of this British

garrison warming his labors at a fire of smuggled French coal. The big ruddy man behind the paper-littered table wore the red coat and blue facings of his own regiment, the Royal Americans. He looked up, grunted, waved a hand toward a chair.

"Mr. Sudden, I find myself in a painful position. You've been denounced as an accomplice of the French spy, Foy, who decamped from the town with his wife not long ago."

"Ah!"

"As a soldier I've put you under arrest. As governor—and one who has admired your energy and courage if not your principles—I'm strongly inclined to doubt the—ah—person who makes the accusation." He thrust forward his big face, framed in the tight white wig. "Damme, Sudden, you're an Englishman, you've fought and suffered, you've labored in this wild country, you've seen and know the malice of the French. You've made a fortune here—and a good part of it, I suspect, from supplies to His Majesty's forces. You've no reason to be anything but loyal. What the devil does this mean? What d'you know about this fellow, Foy?"

"Very little, sir"—coolly. "He was a passenger in the ship which carried me here as an emigrant. I met him subsequently about the town. He seemed to have no source of income. I often wondered how he lived."

"Umph! Our—ah—informant says you've been seen to visit him in Hollis Street and—ah—that his lady has been observed to enter your house under rather romantic circumstances. Alone, I mean to say, and at night. What about that, eh?"

Roger looked hurt. "You surely understand, sir—you are a bachelor and a gentleman—that in honor I can't answer that question."

A smile broke over the heavy face. The governor's great fist came down with a whack amongst the papers. "Exactly! Precisely what I thought, precisely what I told Bulkeley! 'A young bachelor and a pretty woman,' I said. 'If dalliance were treason, damme, I'd have to gibbet half Halifax.' Pshaw! I was young once myself, Sudden. These little affairs . . . ha! Well! Mind you, I doubted Mauger's story from the first—"

"Mauger!"

"Yes. A man I detest as I do a skunk. Gives me more trouble than the French. Is he by chance an enemy of yours?"

Roger burned. It was a struggle to keep his voice steady. "In matters of business, yes, sir. I've scored some triumphs at his expense. And just now—well, Mauger stands to gain close on nine thousand pounds if he can so much as smudge my reputation."

Lawrence opened his eyes very wide. "God's death! You play for pretty stakes, you commissaries, don't you?' His thick fingers drummed. "I command the forces—nominally, you understand—until Amherst arrives. He's still at sea somewhere. But the actual commander, Amherst or no Amherst—and quite unofficially mark you—is one of the brigadiers, a favorite of Mr. Pitt's, a feverish young madman who's never seen America till now and says pish to all advice. Talks of landing the army boldly on the Louisburg beaches in the teeth of the French entrenchments, in broad daylight and from open boats, begad! Says Boscawen's ships could take Louisburg alone —says the army should do it in ten days and push on to Quebec! Pooh-poohs the corps of rangers I've raised and says colonial troops are all cowardly dogs that 'fall down in their own dirt at the first musket shot.' Hates Scotsmen like poison, yet proposes to lead 'em into battle. 'Od's life, he talks like that fellow Braddock—and you know what happened to Braddock!"

"What," demanded Roger, teeth on edge, "has this to do with me?"

"Everything, Sudden! That cunning fellow Mauger's gone to him with his information, knowing I wouldn't give it the grace of a second thought. So, you see? I wanted you to know the sort of man you have to deal with. They're awaiting you in the righthand chamber at the end of the hall. Go on then, tell him

Mauger was only a secondary figure to Sudden, whose whole attention was frozen by the figure at the desk. "So! We meet again, Sir Highwayman!" Wolfe said.

what you've told me. He's a bachelor himself and about your age. Think of it, thirty-one and a brigadier! What's the British army coming to?"

Roger was tempted to answer that. The French would either slaughter them on the Louisburg beaches or ambush them in the woods between the shore and the fortress. But he was consumed with hate for Mauger and the desire to meet him face to face. He passed swiftly down the hall, rapped on the righthand door and stepped inside.

There was Mauger warming his raptorial claws—and doubtless his courage—at the fire across the room. But Roger saw him as a secondary figure in a startling little tableau. His whole attention was drawn and frozen by the figure at the desk. Years shrank to hours, the Atlantic to a step, and here in this chamber he could smell again the reek of the Thames marshes, hear the rattle and splash of the fat yellow coach, the echo of his own voice crying, "Stand!" and the creak of rusty gibbet chains as Jemmy Calter cocked his hollow eye along the Rochester road.

As the first great suck of breath subsided through his taut nostrils, so his mind subsided to a rueful resignation. A long run for the money, after all. Six guineas? Seven guineas? He could not remember now. Ah, well! The clockwork of the world was queerly meshed and the little wheel that seemed to run so fast could turn the big one only a cog or two at a revolution. Tick! Tock! and there you were, and there was the thin, ridiculous young major of the Twentieth Foot, with his sandy brows and hot blue eyes and his face of a starved rabbit as plain as yesterday.

"So!" uttered the apparition. "We meet again, Sir Highwayman!"

"I'm afraid you're mistaken," Roger said.

"Oh, come! Your name's Sudden, I'm told. Mr. Roger Sudden? Mine's Wolfe—you must remember me. I was—let me see—'on old Hangman Hawley's staff at Culloden'—ha!—'safely removed from the broadswords'—eh?—and 'robbing the Highland gentlefolk in the name of King George.' I think that was the way it went. What it is to have a memory!"

Damn your memory, thought Roger violently, He said, coldly enough, "I don't know what you're talking about, my dear sir, and I wish you a very good evening—"

"Stay!" snapped the voice, like a pistol. No escape, of course. Face it out, then. After all, what proof was there? "I want you to meet an old friend of yours, Mr. Sudden."

"Mr. Mauger is no friend of mine."

"So I gather, so I gather! But Mr. Mauger, a painstaking man, seems to have found someone who was . . . Mr. Mauger, will you be so good as to call in your witness?"

Mauger sprang to an inner door, and in shuffled Isaac Trope, hat in hand, soiled white hair bound with a ribbon of Lumley's, his old limbs clad in a suit of wrinkled drab. He turned his disreputable head from side to side, bestowing a thin malicious grin on Mauger and Roger and General Wolfe impartially.

"This is the man?" snapped Wolfe to Old Evil.

"Yes, that's him. Roger Sudden. Come to my house in Tooley Street one night in Jannivary '49, along of a seaman, and both a-stink o' horsesweat. Rented my garret and kep' 'emselves pretty close, though they used to go down the river to Wappin' quite a bit."

"Um! And they'd plenty of money the night they came?"

"Hear the guineas clinkin' and rollin' now, I can, sir, t'other side o' the door. 'Fust we'll divide the spoils,' says Mr. Sudden, off-hand like. And the sailor says, 'No, ye done it all. As bold a piece o' work as ever I see.' But Mr. Sudden had his way—he usually did, did Mr. Sudden—so they talked o' what they'd do. The seaman wanted to go for a pirate but Mr. Sudden says no, there's better ways to fortune. They talked o' the colonies. . . "

"And have you any proof of all this?"

TROPE fished in his unclean coattails and with some diffidence laid a pair of shabby leather objects on the table. "Them purses, sir. Found 'em in the alley under their garret window next mornin'. Nice things they was then, one quite plain and t'other with *E.B.* sewed on the leather in white silk—"

"Colonel Belcher's," said Wolfe to Roger, cheerfully. "Remember?"

"So I kep' 'em, sir, thinkin' as I might find the owner, like. Used 'em a bit, after a time, and hopin' ye don't mind, sir, bein' a poor old man in the lodgin'-keepin' way, me and my daughter—"

"Any others in Halifax who'd recognize this man as your lodger in Tooley Street?"

"Ho, yes, sir! They wouldn't like to come here and speak up, bein' friends o' his. But ye could make 'em talk, sir. There's Sal—she's an orf'cer's lady now and needs takin' down a peg or two—and there's Killick, he's a fisherman—"

Wolfe turned the hot blue gaze to Roger. "Are you satisfied or shall I send for them?"

"Don't trouble them."

"You admit the robbery?"

"Yes."

"Ha!" cried Mauger from the fireside. Wolfe regarded him with distaste.

"That will be all. Take your witness and get out."

And as the sinister pair departed through the side door, "Well, my Jacobite friend, you seem to have made an ill choice in your company from first to last. From Chevalier to Shylock in three moves—a proper rogue's progress! What have you to say for yourself?"

"Nothing."

"It's a poor dog that won't bark in his own defense."

"It's a worse one that whines at the whip."

"Umph! What about this matter of espionage? This man Foy, eh?"

"Nothing to say."

"You admit Mauger's charge?"

"Not at all, but nothing I could say would make any difference in view of what's just passed."

"You admit it then!" Wolfe sprawled his ungainly person in the chair. How long he was! A good six-foot-three if an inch. "D'ye know you intrigue me, Sudden? I've never forgotten that day on the Rochester road. I've never seen anything so devilish cool in my life. I'm told you've done remarkable things in this country, that the savages look upon you with the fear of God, and I don't doubt it for a moment. Now, I can understand a Jacobite up to a point—to the point where he betrays his own blood to the French. An Englishman—from Kent, like me, if I know Kentish speech—and his country in peril of conquest, all Europe in arms against her, one might say—ninety millions against five, as Mr. Pitt puts it—and nothing to look back on but a record of failure and defeat! And a gentleman! Why, I've an army of rogues and drunkards, the sweepings of England, but they'll fight for her, they'll fight for her!"

Wolfe sprang up and began to pace the room on his thin, ridiculous legs, fluttering the candles as he passed and repassed the table. "All bungled so far, damme! Minorca! There we lost the whole Mediterranean, and the fleet that should have turned the tables ran away . . . Parliament! Parliament should have hanged itself for folly and neglect! They shot the admiral instead—poor Byng! . . . And Rochefort, a melancholy mess, after all our high hopes! . . . Fumbling! Bungling! Councils of war! What we need is less councils and more war—Good God, what a spectacle! . . . Well, I'll have no Rochefort here! Get ashore, somehow or anyhow. And fight! Fight!"

He fired off these ejaculations as he strode up and down, covering the chamber floor in five extraordinary strides each way, shaking an irritable fist at every point. His high voice broke sometimes into a squeak.

Roger was forgotten. With a cynical amusement he watched the performance of this odd red-coated Hamlet. At last he broke in savagely.

"If all this is true, what are you doing here with all these ships and men? Why aren't you and Boscawen ranged along the Channel?"

Wolfe halted in mid-stride. "What! Sit and wait for destruction? A man with the odds against him must leap out and strike—strike where his force will count the most!"

"You don't mean Pitt's chancing everything on this wild stroke in America?"

"I mean England must take chances right and left, and she's taking this one for a start."

ROGER stared at the man, a fit choice for this folly. His mind reeled back to the Highlands after Culloden, when the glens were filled with hope of a great French armament fitting out at Brest. That was D'Anville's force, which was for Scotland, for a direct blow at the English from the north. But D'Anville sailed across the sea instead for a blow at the English in America—and laid the bones of his army on the wild shores of Chebucto. And now—and now England was repeating history with the roles reversed! It was incredible.

Wolfe seemed to recollect himself. He threw his ungainly length into the chair. His mouth was petulant, his large blue eyes as hard as chinaware. He stabbed a long, accusing finger. "You were in love with this Foy woman?"

"Yes."

"And Mauger says you've sold out to him, that you've transferred your fortune to Louisburg over a period of many months. D'ye deny it?"

"No."

"Well, you're honest about it. I don't believe you're a spy. You're just a Jacobite rogue who's picked up an itch for the bawbees amongst the Scots. Orderly!"

A grenadier-capped head appeared at the door.

"My compliments to Captain Bulkeley and ask him to come here, please."

The secretary entered, with an impersonal glance at Roger.

"Captain Bulkeley, I wish this man confined to jail awaiting His Majesty's pleasure."

"Very good, sir. The charge is treason?"

"Not enough evidence. I have evidence enough to hang him on quite another matter, in case he should attempt some nonsense with lawyers and so on. But all I want is to keep him out of mischief for a few weeks, in case he should be tempted to communicate with the French. When Louisburg has fallen you may let him go." Wolfe nodded in dismissal and turned to his papers, shouting for the orderly.

Roger marched before Bulkeley out of the room. A file of grenadiers from the governor's guard conducted him through the streets.

The military prison, a stone house built by Colonel Horsman in the early days, stood in the shadow of the fort above the south gate of the town. The way lay past Roger's own house and he saw a little knot of soldiers with a lantern, engaged in argument with a burly man in seaman's dress. It was Old Hux. As the file tramped past, the master of the *Fair Lady* turned his head and met Roger's gaze for a moment. His jaw dropped. When the prison door closed behind him, Roger found that he

could smile at the memory of that amazed *O* in the midst of Job Huxley's whiskers.

CHAPTER XXIII

PÈRE MAILLARD

THE little prison lacked the *bonhomie* of the Chateau Louis-*damné*, for its inhabitants were soldiers of the garrison confined for petty military crimes and kept apart in narrow stone kennels like unruly dogs.

By standing on his stool Roger could gaze through a small barred window high in the wall. It faced toward Pleasant Street and he could see the south corner of his own garden wall and catch recurring glimpses of a bored redcoat facing about at the end of his beat. But chiefly he whiled the daylight hours of the succeeding days looking down the slope to the harbor. What went on there was interesting enough. The expedition was busy rehearsing its descent upon the shores of Cape Breton.

Every day at a signal a swarm of boats put off from the anchored transports, each crammed with soldiers and seamen pulling furiously for the Dartmouth shore. It made a curious spectacle at this distance. The laden boats were like bright red insects, many-legged, running over the water toward the forest as if in haste to devour it. From the bushes along the shore came small white puffs of powder smoke and a delayed *pop-pop-pop*, very faint and far; but the insects came on gallantly, abandoned their dark beetle-cases at the waterside and, with much wriggle and scurry, formed along the beach a narrow and continuous red mass, tipped with steel.

Then, at a further signal, the mass plunged into the woods. The trees seemed to swallow them as a vast green frog might lick into its maw a wandering column of red ants. For a time the popping continued, and a murmur that might have been cheers; then silence, and at last a reappearance of the ants, straggling now, a leisurely resumption of their beetle-form and a journey back to the ships. All very pretty, but what would happen when they tried that splendid game under the fire of well-entrenched infantry and cannon? That man Wolfe! Roger felt a grudging sympathy for stout old Lawrence with his harsh memories of warfare in the Nova Scotia woods.

Mid-May brought a touch of summer weather, stifling in the small stone jail, and the complaint of the prisoners brought the corporal and his men to take out the windows. In the hot nights they stood tiptoe on their stools, faces against the bars, sucking at the cool air outside until the strain of the position wearied them and made sleep possible.

On such a night, long after the other kennels rang with snores, Roger lay hot and wakeful. Some late wanderer whistled past the south side of the prison, tramping down the rough lane that climbed the slope to Spring Gardens. The sound came nearer as the fellow turned up Pleasant Street toward the town. It had a delusive quality, as if the man walked in the very shadow of the prison wall. Roger was vaguely irritated. Then, in a second, all his nerves leaped and tingled. That tune! He climbed on the stool. The roofs of the town were stark and silent on the lower slope. He could not see the foot of the wall straight underneath. On Pleasant Street nothing moved. Silence everywhere. Then the sauntering whistler again—below! The guard? The guard was asleep long before this, excepting the sentry in his little coffin facing the Spring Gardens lane and the palisade.

Roger put his mouth to the bars and took up a stave of that song of Sally Madigan's, whistling softly like the other.

> When the pie was opened the birds began
> to sing,
> Wasn't that a dainty dish . . .

A hiss below. A rustling as of several feet in grass, a scrape, a silence; then a light touch of wood on stone. Suddenly a head, enormous against the starlight. Old Hux and his beard!

"Roger?"

"Yes."

"All hands asleep in there?"

"I think so, but—"

"How's the mortar 'round them bars?"

"Pretty rotten. What are you—"

The head vanished. After a minute a pair of immense hands appeared in the starlit square and writhed about the end of the grating.

"Look here," Roger whispered hoarsely, "you can't—"

"*Whist!* I've got all my lads below, tailin' on the rope. One good heave and out comes the whole damned gratin', or they're no men o' mine. Listen, Roger! When it goes, climb out and let yourself drop—we'll catch ye. And be ready to cut an' run as soon as ye hit the ground."

"But the guard!"

A chuckle. "The guard'll have somethin' else to think about. Stand by!"

Hux disappeared. The whistle began again, but this time the tune was *Well Sold the Cow*. At the end of the first bar it perished. From beyond the decrepit palisade about the south gate came a voice raised in the harsh, high war-whoop of the Micmacs, tearing the peace of the night to shreds. It went on and on, in those yowling undulations which had been the very voice of terror for Halifax through the years. From the front of the prison the sentry fired his piece and tumbled out the guard, and from the direction of Horsman's Fort just up the slope came shouts, the rattle of a drum, a

clatter of arms being snatched out of the racks. Finally a cannon sent a charge of grapeshot shrieking over the lane to fall amongst the starlit mounds of the burial ground.

"Heave!" hissed the voice of Old Hux below. A sharp creak of taut hemp, a momentary groan of iron under strain, and the grating vanished into the night. Roger pulled himself up, squirmed through the hole and, not without misgivings, dropped head first into the darkness.

It was not a long drop and he was caught at once in a thicket of up-reaching arms. "Now!" snapped Old Hux, and off they went, seven swift and furtive shapes flitting toward Citadel Hill through the upper pastures of the town.

HALIFAX came to life with a roar. A gun boomed from the Parade—the signal gun. At once others thudded from the three waterfront batteries, from George's Island, from the Eastern Battery down-harbor on the Dartmouth side. From Horsman's Fort came a steady rattle of small-arms as its guard shot industriously into the graveyard. In the barrack yard to the north, the regiments of the garrison were turning out in a fine flurry of drums and commands. From the dark shoulder of Citadel Hill the fugitives saw that even the fleet was alarmed. Lanterns flitted about the decks, and all the gun-ports seemed to open at once, like rows of wicked yellow eyes.

Old Hux led the way through a wide gap in the palisade and they passed across the south slope, leaping the low stone walls of the pastures, and came to the brook which flowed out of the common. This they followed down, blundering amongst the alders in the dark.

"'Struth!" grunted Old Hux. "What a gripe I've got in the side! Fit to split me . . . no damned wonder . . . hare-and-hounds at my age!"

"Where are we heading for?" Roger gasped.

"The jolly-boat . . . at the waterin' place . . . mouth o' this brook . . . nigh to Black Rock . . . *Fair Lady's* off shore . . . ready to sail . . . put ye in Louisburg . . . Who's to know?"

"But how did all this come about, man?"

"Saw ye that night . . . couldn't find out a thing . . . Then a woman came to the wharf in a closed chair . . . Irish, by the brogue . . . told me where ye were and what to do . . . Knowed more than common about jails and such . . . dressed like a lady, too!"

"But the war-whoop—the Indians!"

"Just a bam to fool the sojers . . . Friend o' yourn . . . Tom Fuller, captain of a ranger comp'ny . . . Asked him if he'd like to cut away to Louisburg along o' you . . . but he said no, he was payin' a debt . . . an' somethin' about bein' an Englishman."

They trotted, breathless and drenched with sweat, into the open at last. Water gleamed under the stars and there was a rattle of beach cobbles. The boat lay waiting, drawn up amongst the raffle of last tide, with a fisherman standing guard—Killick, the former boatman of Tooley Street. Down-harbor, off Mauger's Beach, that smugglers' rendezvous, sat the dim shape of the snow. "Phew! Fust we smuggle ye out o' Louisburg, now we're a-goin' to smuggle ye back, Roger." Old Hux chuckled. "What a lark!"

Roger put hand to breast and touched the little stone fish with reverence. Behind them Halifax ruffled its drums and boomed defiance at the night.

Journeys which end in lovers' meetings are seldom without difficulties, but Roger found the difficulties slight. Under cover of the eternal fog which in early summer clung to Cape Breton like a tight wig to a bony head, and with his fine smuggler's knowledge of the more chancy passages, Old Hux set him ashore on bleak Rochefort Point three days after leaving Halifax. He set off blithely over the springy moorland in the direction of the town and at once blundered into a stone breastwork manned by a detachment of Volontaires Étrangers.

He was questioned in bad French by their lieutenant, a surprised and indignant Teuton—the Étrangers were a German regiment sold into French service by an impecunious princeling—and marched off to Louisburg between a pair of stiffly strutting privates in new white uniforms faced with green. They entered the fortress by the Maurepas Gate and Roger persuaded them to take him first to the establishment of M. Rodrigues. Rodrigues rescued him at once, cursed the soldiers for a pair of illegitimate blockheads and dismissed them, kicking each stolidly departing rump with care and skill.

The merchant then embraced him with delight and launched into a long and detailed account of his investments, but Roger cut him short, demanding the whereabouts of Madame Foy.

"*Caramba!*" cried Rodrigues. "That sot Foy went off to France weeks ago . . . and this that was *madame* is known in Louisburg as *mademoiselle*. For reasons," he added with a leer, "which one can appreciate." And, seeing Roger's impatience, "On the south side of the Rue D'Orléans, *monsieur*, between the Rue Dauphine and the Rue l'Hôpital—a small gray house with the sign of a seamstress."

Roger was off at once, running up the Rue Dauphine. He found the house by the sign of the scissors, a narrow and gloomy dwelling, half stone, half timber, on the chilly side of the Rue D'Orléans where the Cape Breton sun fell lightly in summer and in winter not at all. He hammered on the door.

It was answered by a tall woman with a red Norman face, but the sound of his voice brought a rush of petticoats down the stairs and Mary into his arms.

"Oh, Roger! I knew you'd come! I knew! I knew!"

He kissed her hungrily and her mouth responded with the complete rapture of a woman who gives up her soul. The seamstress looked on, caught between pleasure and astonishment, and saw him slip a hand beneath *Mademoiselle's* chin and put her head back, like a boy with a stolen apple feasting his eyes between bites. Mary's cheeks were flushed, and when she opened her eyes he saw them full of tears.

"Oh, Roger, is it true? We're not dreaming?"

"It's true."

"And you've no regrets?"

"None."

"I'm—I'm alone, Roger. You understand?"

The seamstress departed, suddenly bored with this incomprehensible English. Mary drew him into a small chamber at the front of the house, furnished with a squat Canadian stove, a pair of maplewood chairs, an escritoire and an intimate little sofa covered with red velvet. They sat instinctively in the close confinement of the sofa, arms about each other, cheeks together, gazing with absorbed eyes at the traffic in the Rue D'Orléans.

BEYOND the little bull's-eye panes moved a colorful stream: fishermen and their women in homespun and great Breton sabots, merchants and clerks in broadcloth and brass buttons, seamen of Des Gouttes' fleet in untidy red shirts and nightcaps and short striped petticoat trousers, soldiers of the Compagnies de la Marine in white coats and blue breeches and gaiters, infantry of the line all in white with a glimse of scarlet waistcoat, artillerymen in red breeches and blue coats, Voluntaires Étrangers in white and green, twos and threes of fine ladies in all the hues of the rainbow, hooded nuns, brothers of the Frères de la Charité in dark soutanes, Indian men and boys in clout and moccasins like images of bronze, squaws in caribou-hide smocks or rags and tatters of French petticoats, Negroes from Haiti and Martinique clad in anything from sail-cloth to cast-off uniforms. Heavy-wheeled carts moved ponderously through the mass drawn by oxen or wiry Norman ponies. Officers a-horseback and afoot. Now and then a carriole drawn by horses that would have made a gypsy shudder.

"It's like Halifax," Mary said in a low voice.

"Oh? I was thinking how different it was."

"The soldiers and sailors, I mean—so many to the townsfolk. Do you know, Roger, I feel afraid. Not for myself but for all these people who don't know what it means. It seemed a wonderful game once. Now it's just something horrible, like a nightmare where a frightful face approaches you and you can't turn your head away. Jamie would despise me if he knew how I feel."

"I trust your brother's well?"

"Oh, Roger, he's changed. It's been so long. It was years before they granted him a captaincy. He got a little extra money as an interpreter, but they've paid him wretchedly for all he's done. He's cold and cynical and he used to be so gay—quite sinful sometimes. Now he'll have nothing to do with society—says the Louisburg ladies are an ugly lot who play cards from morn to night, and the gentlemen can talk nothing but fish. He keeps to himself and his books in a little house on the Rue du Rempart. Some of the Regiment Artois have made a garden for him. He goes off fishing for trout and salmon sometimes to remind himself of Scotland."

"What does he think of this affair between Halifax and Louisburg, now that it's come to push of pike?"

Her lips compressed. "He says the only hope is to beat the English off the landing places. If they get their guns ashore, Louisburg is doomed."

Roger looked his surprise.

"Oh, it's just the bitter mood that's grown upon him, Roger, and the jealousy of the French officers. He sees no good in anything now. The ditch is dry, the walls are shaky, the gun carriages are rotten. The fortress was designed thirty years ago when artillery wasn't as powerful and bombshells weren't as destructive as they are now. He estimates the garrison will be outnumbered three to one. The corps of officers is divided by jealousy—the Canadians, the veterans of Louisburg, the officers of the new regiments from France—each faction poison to the other. As for the command, Des Gouttes is afraid to take his ships out and fight Boscawen, and too full of his own importance to take orders from a soldier. Drucour's a dreamer, Prevost a robber and Franquet no engineer . . . and so on, and on. Poor Jamie!"

"Have you told brother Jamie about me?"

"Only that I'm interested in a Halifax gentleman, a good Jacobite."

Roger's teeth grated. "Jacobite! Listen, my darling, I can understand your attachment to Prince Charlie's cause in the beginning—faith, I'd something of the sort myself—but a lot of romance has gone down the gutter since we left Europe, you and I. For one thing, the Chevalier's forsaken his own cause—"

"I don't believe it!"

"Believe this, then. He's a drunken vagabond, wandering about Europe in disguise with Tina Walkinshaw, a baggage he met at Stirling in the '45. He's had a child by her. And she's sister to a servant in the Prince of Wales' household in London—a pretty liaison! The Jacobites sent MacNamara to speak their mind about the woman, and Charlie consigned him and them to the deuce. No one believes in the cause now except fanatics like your brother—and there's a man I'd very much like to meet!

I want to air my opinion of a man who'd throw his sister into the arms of a drunkard old enough to be her father, and then persuade 'em both to risk the hangman on some shabby enterprise that I've a notion was to benefit himself!"

Her eyes flashed. "Then you mustn't meet him, Roger! There are things I could say—things I've ached to tell you—but while James holds me to my promise, I must hold my tongue. Please be patient just a little longer." She turned and put her hands on his shoulders, saying softly in Gaelic, "*Luaidh mo chridhe*, my darling, don't tear my heart between my brother and you. Tell me you love me!"

"I love you."

"It's your mouth that says it, not your heart. And O my lover, there's so little time!"

AT RODRIGUES' urging, Roger took up lodging in the merchant's house. A drawing account furnished him with funds and a wardrobe which if French was none the worse for that. Mornings he spent in the countinghouse, going over those sprawling enterprises in which he now had such a substantial interest. In the afternoons he took his exercise, riding along the rough harbor road or strolling the ramparts, Louisburg's favorite promenade, beginning at the Dauphin bastion by the main gate and sweeping in a great loop about the town, with views across the moorland and the sea. And every evening in the little chamber in the Rue d'Orléans he made love to Mary—discreetly, for she insisted on the niceties as if she were *jeune fille*, but with all the impatience of his blood. She said that he was "difficult." She was cold, he retorted. But no man who had her kisses could believe that.

One of these tiffs was interrupted when, hands against his breast, she felt the shape of the amulet.

"Roger! Whatever is this?"

"Nothing much—a talisman I got from the Indians."

"Do let me see it!"

Indifferently he unfastened his shirt and she turned the thing in her fingers.

"It's very crude," she said, unimpressed. "What's it good for?"

"Luck—luck in all things."

"And has it never failed you?"

"In one thing only."

"And what's that?"

"It's supposed to provide good wooing, pleasure in love and sure begetting . . ."

"Roger!" The wrinkled nose again. "Of all things—a superstitious Englishman!"

There was a stir at the door, the Norman woman welcoming someone, a quiet male voice advancing.

The lovers sprang up and apart, self-consciously, Mary smoothing swiftly her rumpled sleeves and fichu, Roger gazing across the street at the imposing brick-and-stone hospital of the Frères de la Charité. A wisp of a man came into the room, silent in moccasins, clad in a long and ragged cassock. An ivory crucifix hung from a silver chain about his neck. Baldness had given him a natural tonsure, from the round pink edge of which a straggle of short gray locks hung down. His face was the color of an Indian's, and gone to skin and bone and long gray beard. In their deep sockets his eyes were intelligent and benign but a little vague, and he blinked as he looked about the chamber as if his eyesight had been dulled by books—or too much sun-glare on too many journeys.

He exclaimed, "*Ma'mselle*, I have—eh! . . . Pardon! You have a visitor." He paused, embarrassed, in the middle of the floor.

"This is Monsieur Sudden, father. Roger, this is Père Maillard, missionary to the savages in Ile Royale."

"In all Acadie," the priest corrected gently, with a slow bob of head toward Roger. "I am what I was before the coming of Monsieur Le Loutre."

"Le Loutre!" snapped Roger. "Where is he?"

"In an English prison, *monsieur*. The bishop sent him back to France after the unfortunate affair of the Acadians, but his ship was taken on the way. He has been three years a prisoner of the English in the Isle of Jersey."

This was news! Roger found it hard to restrain a grin. Cornwallis had always wanted to hang The Otter, but this was better than hemp. Durance in English hands, within sight of France, so near and yet so far, embittered with sour memories, what a purgatory for that man who had sent so many to hell!

"You speak French well, *monsieur*," the priest observed. "You are an Englishman, are you not?"

"Monsieur Sudden," said Mary quickly, "is an associate of Rodrigues et Fils. The war has driven him from Halifax."

"Ah!" The old man's wrinkles parted in a rather sweet smile. "But surely it is not altogether war which brings him to our Louisburg?"

Mary looked down demurely. Roger's tongue could not hold back the cynicism Wolfe had flung at him. "Where a man's treasure is, father, there is his heart also."

The old man beamed. "My felicitations, *monsieur! Ma'mselle* is charming and of a generous heart. She has been an angel to my poor savages. You see, *ma'mselle*, I have come to beg again!"

Mary turned pleasantly to the escritoire and Roger gave a mental sniff. Priests—always after money! As if this wheedling old man weren't supported by the king of France! That was the trouble with them all in Acadie—French agents

PÈRE MAILLARD

first and missionaries afterwards. He remembered tales of Père Maillard. Gossip in the Micmac lodges said that Le Loutre had come to despise Maillard as an old dotard, too feeble or too gentle for the war path anymore.

As Mary put two louis in the lean hand, Roger suggested carelessly, "One thing you must be thankful for, *monsieur*—the movement of the savages toward the east during the past five years. Now that you are no longer young, *voila!* your parish comes to you!"

The myopic eyes regarded Roger carefully. "Yes, one should be thankful for that, I suppose. The movement has been very slow. Many are still west of Canso, and of those in Ile Royale only one or two hundred have reached Louisburg. It was a design of Monsieur Le Loutre to gather the savages into this part of the country—for the better distribution of charity, of course."

"Of course! And how does it fare, this land of promise?"

The old man looked unhappy. "I regret to say that few in Louisburg have the charity of *mademoiselle.*"

"But surely, *monsieur le gouverneur—*"

"The governor promises much. He expects to see a multitude of savages camped in the woods behind the town. But even my frugal Micmacs cannot live very long on promises."

Roger was tempted to ask how long they could live in the face of English powder and shot. The missionary forestalled him, speaking slowly, cautiously, without once lifting that mild and candid gaze from Roger's face.

"*Monsieur,* I am a human being, with a Frenchman's love for France. But I cannot disguise from myself the way in which our governor hopes to employ the savages in the war upon the English. Nor can I forget the desolation brought upon those unhappy Acadians by the misguided zeal of Le Loutre. That was like a warning from God, whose wrath is terrible. It seems to me that, like the Acadians, my poor savages have been too long a pawn in this game of nations. But the fault is not with priests and governors alone. The traders must share the guilt, Monsieur Beau Soleil!"

Roger started as if shot. He put an instinctive hand to his breast and found the shirt gaping and the little stone fish exposed.

"One has heard of you, *monsieur,*" the old man went on calmly. "I regret that my weak eyes took so long to recognize the totem. What do you here in Louisburg?"

"*Mademoiselle* has told you."

"But surely there is something else—something to do with the Indians?"

"Nothing, *monsieur,* absolutely."

"It is true," Mary broke in eagerly. "He came here for the love of me."

"*Eh, bien!* If you came here simply for the love of *mademoiselle, monsieur,* perhaps you will give me the little fish, for the love of God!"

Roger was taken aback. What, part with his luck? His unruly tongue rapped out, "Is not the totem about your own neck good enough for them, *mon père?*"

"With the crucifix I save their souls. It is their bodies I am thinking of."

"I have my own body to consider, *monsieur.*"

"Have you considered your soul?" the old man cried. He bobbed his head to Mary in that funny old-fashioned way and departed in a shuffling whisper of worn moccasins.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE PLACE OF THE CORMORANTS

THE table of Monsieur Rodrigues was renowned, and not merely for the excellence of its wines. In a soil and climate where vegetables grew poorly and grains not at all, where most of the populace lived off the sea, where even the officers' messes had a well-established reek of stockfish, the board of Rodrigues was unique. The wide reach of his busy trade enabled him to ply his guests with spiced dishes from India, the fruits of the West Indies, pastries of white flour smuggled from New England, Canadian butter, in addition to all the known delicacies of France. The savages kept him well supplied with such tasty matters as oysters from Ile Saint Jean, maple sugar and syrup, choice cuts of moose and caribou meat and an abundance of wild duck. Not even Governor Drucour in his splendid quarters in the Bastion du Roi could boast such fare.

Thus Roger fared, and in a fortnight came to know the gourmets of the garrison, not least amongst them Colonel St. Julhien of the

Regiment Artois, and Loppinot, the town-major. Loppinot's favorite jest at table was a toast to Monsieur Sudden, "whom I bought from the savages, you comprehend, for two pounds of condemned powder, a dull knife and a *velte* of the worst rum that ever came out of Martinique!" And he would add amid the laughter and the clink of glasses that *mordieu!* this gentleman had skipped his ransom and never repaid so much as a drop!

This epicurean life lost nothing when on the third of June a great fleet of English transports anchored in Chapeau Rouge Bay, and Boscawen's warships filled with white canvas the seaward view from the ramparts. Rather there was a new zest in every wine and dish, a louder laughter 'round the board. The general note was one of confidence, but to Roger it sounded a little too high, a little too near the edge of hysteria. He became restless and a few days after the appearance of the fleet, he asked Rodrigues to procure him a permission to visit one of the posts toward Chapeau Rouge. "I should like to stay for a time, to watch events."

"Ah! That is excellent! I shall ask Prevost to grant you a commission in one of the Compagnies de la Marine."

"You misunderstand me. I am not a fighting man."

A sharp flick of the Basque's black eyes. "One has the impression that you are, my friend. But of course you know yourself best. You cannot go simply as an observer, however. The regulations will not permit. You must be prepared to serve in some capacity." He fished a horn snuffbox from his waistcoat and took a pinch of the coarse rappee he favored.

"If you merely want something to do, Roger, I could employ you very usefully on something else at the moment. I am instructed by Drucour to establish a great cache of provisions, blankets, clothing and ammunition on the bank of the Miré River, fifteen miles through the forest from Louisburg. For a secret purpose, you understand, in case the English should succeed in landing sufficient forces to cut off the town. The matter must be kept hidden from our savages especially, else they will steal everything. The place we have chosen—mark this carefully—is just north of the woodcutters' road which runs from Louisburg to the long lake of the Miré. A small brook flows down to the lake through a ravine in a forest of firs. In that ravine. Every precaution must be taken—"

"But that is not what I want," Roger protested. "Besides, if the English succeed in landing while I am there, I should find myself cut off from the town—and from *mademoiselle*."

"*Eh, bien*, then I suggest the post at Coromandière, an hour's ride from the town. You could go as an interpreter, shall we say, to the little band of savages employed as scouts by our forces there. It is a place of no importance—the English must land nearer Louisburg, at Flat Point or White Point, where it is possible to put artillery ashore. Nevertheless, Coromandière is well guarded lest the English attempt to land and turn our positions to the east. Yes"—with a hint of sarcasm—"I think Coromandière is the very place for one who does not wish to fight, and yet—for the sake of his friends as well as himself—must give that appearance. There you will find old Colonel St. Julhien, whom you have met at my table, and his Regiment Artois. They are snugly entrenched at the head of the little cove and have a camp of tents in the woods behind. A charming spot, a pleasant time of year, and you may depend that St. Julhien maintains a very good table. You shall go tomorrow, my dear Roger. I shall make the arrangements at once!"

THE Place of the Cormorants was picturesque, if not quite the idyllic scene that Rodrigues had painted. In the craggy coast, just where it curved boldly west to form Chapeau Rouge Bay, the shallow cove made a gap perhaps six hundred yards across, with a strip of sand at its head. The beach had the color of rust, and so had the steep gravel face of the bluff behind it.

Along the bluff top ran the French entrenchment, with a parapet of logs. On platforms at intervals sat eleven cannon of various kinds—six of them swivel-mounted. Behind this position the land rose unevenly for about a mile, covered with scrub spruce woods. A small brook tumbled down the long slope and made a bright gleam on the beach at the east end. Amongst the raw tree-stumps on either side of the brook ravine were clustered the tents of the Regiment Artois, and hundreds of men in soiled white breeches and red waistcoats dark with sweat were toiling between the woods and the sea, cutting down the tough wind-blasted trees, dragging them to the bluff edge and toppling them onto the beach. Already the sand was half hidden by this abattis, with the butts toward the bank and the wild branches pointing stiffly seaward. It looked like a thicket growing on the very edge of the sea.

Roger considered the approach. Boats entering the cove must come under the plunging fire of cannon as soon as they passed its broad mouth, and as they converged toward the tree-tangled beach they must face the blast of grapeshot from the swivel-guns and the fusillade of St. Julhien's thousand men.

"What do you think of it?" demanded St. Julhien.

"Only a madman would attempt it," answered Roger with conviction.

On the east side of the cove, a spur of the main ridge came down to the sea. Upon it, just above the shore, stood a small earthwork and

From seaward, beyond the rocky islet at the cove mouth where the cormorants nested, came the signal guns of the English fleet, a continual grumble in the fog. "Aha!" St. Julhien cried. "He does not like his situation, Monsieur Boscawen!"

a platform of logs commanding a flank view of the beach. St. Julhien waved a hand. "That magpie's nest was made for the Scottish officer, Johnstone, last year. He had a fantasy that Milor Loudoun might attempt to land on the other side of the butte—impossible, of course. The beach ends where you see. Around the point is nothing but a mass of rocks, broken and tumbled, where the sea breaks even in calm weather, and above it the steep face of the butte, and then the stunted forest itself, pressed by the winds into thickets where a goat could scarcely force its way. It is like that all the way to Flat Point, where Marin waits with his Regiment Bourgogne."

From seaward, beyond the rocky islet at the cove mouth where the cormorants nested, came the signal guns of the English fleet, a continual grumble in the fog.

"Aha!" St. Julhien cried. "He does not like his situation, Monsieur Boscawen! To have his great fleet massed in this bay, with the wind east and a mist as thick as soup!"

"And the chance of Des Gouttes coming down upon him with the weather gage," suggested Roger.

"Des Gouttes!" contemptuously. *"Cette vache n'a pas de cornes!"*

Almost as he spoke there was a sigh in the tree tops from the west.

"Aha!" snapped the old soldier. "The wind blows now from Chapeau Rouge, which the English in their barbarous dialect call Gabarus. In an hour the fog will be gone. Des Gouttes has lost his opportunity! But at least we shall have a sight of our enemy!"

The white mass yielded reluctantly before the wind. In an hour the inner fringe of the anchored English fleet was visible and the nearest ships promptly put off boats to examine the shore defenses. St. Julhien's gunners tried hopeful long shots with a twenty-four-pounder. From Flat Point and White Point came the thunder of other guns wasting powder in the same attempt. The boats kept well out of range and finally withdrew.

"They have not seen much of your defenses," Roger commented.

"They have heard us growl, *en tout cas!*" chuckled a major nearby.

"And they have seen the teeth of our coast," said St. Julhien, pointing to the heavy swell breaking on the rocks. He shook his fist at the ships, now fully revealed by the offshore breeze. "You will have to wait, my friends, perhaps for weeks! *Mon Dieu,* there are a lot of you!"

There were indeed. Four miles across the heaving swell lay Chapeau Rouge, blue now in the heat haze, and westward the bay ran a good six miles into the land, and all that dancing blue expanse was inhabited by ships ranging in size from broad-beamed Western Ocean merchantmen to small sloops and jiggers chartered in Halifax and the ports of New England.

Seaward, against a wall of fog still rolling slowly back, gleamed the white topsails of Boscawen's men-of-war, cruising off the port and watching for Des Gouttes.

Roger felt a tingling in his bones. By the whim of Pitt, that gouty man, that Whig, this wild and lonely bay had become a busier water than the Thames at London. What a sight! He was impressed not so much by the ships as by the magnificence of the gamble. Suppose Des Gouttes had ventured out and fallen upon that huddle of wooden sheep in the fog! Suppose they were caught by a hurricane as Holborn was last year, all embayed as they were. And all this hazard so far from home, with invasion and conquest only a Channel-width away! He said to the French officers soberly, "One thing is clear—you are going to have a fight, my friends. Those men have come too far and run too many risks to turn back now."

"*Exactement!*" St. Julhien twisted hard at his gray mustaches. "They will gaze and gaze, and then one day they will chance all in one throw, they will fling themselves at these beaches, into the mouths of our guns, you comprehend, and that will be the end! It is magnificent! It is fate! And to think that it will fall to us—we ourselves—to cripple the power of England in a stroke!"

At mess that evening Roger was listless and absorbed. Young De Gannes set the long tables under the marquee in a roar with some whimsical tale of dalliance in Louisburg—"but ah, *messieurs,* I would give them all for one kind look from a certain demoiselle in the Rue d'Orléans! *Cheveux blond ardent, veux verts* —you comprehend—but alas she is of a cold blood like her brother, that codfish Captain Johnstone." He capped this with a roll of eyes toward the canvas overhead and a doleful, "*Eh, l'amour, le doux auteur de mes cruels supplices!*"

Captain Fagonde, seeing Roger silent in the midst of the laughter, asked with some concern, "What is the matter, *monsieur?*"

"A little something—the heat, perhaps. It is nothing."

"*Mordieu!* When one cannot eat, that is a bore. When one cannot drink, that is a misfortune. But when one cannot laugh at De Gannes, *monsieur,* that is a calamity!"

THE night was humid and the tents hummed with mosquitoes. In this clear weather the English ships had ceased their firing of minute guns but the surf beat and boomed along the shore like a cannonade itself. Roger stirred and chafed in the campaign blanket, dozing uneasily and dreaming a fantastic procession of faces, most of them too vague for recognition and all uttering remarks that had no connection and no meaning. He wakened suddenly and found one of the savages shaking his foot.

"What goes?" he muttered in Micmac.

"The *Aglaseaou* move—many canoes—" the Indian replied.

Outside in the starlight there was nothing to be seen from the darkened English ships except a single light at a masthead off Coromandière. Then he noticed two lights at a masthead somewhat to the east, and far beyond that a cluster of three. Signals? More likely an arrangement for marking the divisions of the fleet at moorings. But the French were stirring and the guard in the trenches was alert. Bayonets glinted in the starlight. Far to seaward the stars faded before a dawn which had yet to come over the horizon. From the tents a subdued buzz of men turning out, the low urgent voices of officers and sergeants, "*En éveil! En éveil!* and St. Julhien hissing to the tambour-major, "Not a tap! At your peril!"

The white coats of the Artois swarmed like ghosts into the trenches along the bluff. Everywhere sounded the slither of ramrods, the *snick* of gun-cocks, the *snack* of pan-guards coming down. There was no sound from seaward but as the first daylight smeared the eastern sky they saw a long shadow undulating over the water between the anchored ships and the shore. Boats! What a multitude! The Artois broke their unnatural silence with a shout.

The English fleet seemed gathered chiefly off Flat Point, where the New Englanders had landed in '45, and the great boat-shadow moved slowly toward that beach. Marin was waiting there with his Regiment Bourgogne. Only two ships lay opposite Coromandière, a frigate and a snow, and as the light increased they made sail and came in boldly to the Cormorant Rock and opened a smart cannonade on St. Julhien's position. The frigate looked like the *Kennington.* Roger was not sure. But he recognized the snow, a stout thing, much bigger than the *Foir Lady.* Her name was *Halifax.* Was that an omen—Birnam wood to Dunsinane?

Most of their shot fell short or thudded into the face of the bluff. The French replied with no better fortune, except that a twenty-four-pounder struck the frigate once and made the splinters fly. The shocked cormorants abandoned their nests and fled with dismal croaks into the west, and that was the chief result of all this powder-burning.

"So!" cried Colonel St. Julhien, mustaches a-quiver. "A little *divertissement* while they land their forces at Flat Point. Hark, they do the same at White Point and beyond—those distant shots must be from Lorambec. But is it possible they think we are deceived? What animals!" He shook his fist at that vast flotilla moving in a great half moon toward Flat Point. "*Mordieu!* How one wishes they would come here! Must those boasters of the Bourgogne have all the fun?"

The Artois were out of their entrenchment, sitting, squatting, standing on the log parapet,

eager to see the debacle when Marin opened fire. The westerly horn of the half moon was now quite close inshore, just out of cannon range, and the first rays of sunshine awakened the bright scarlet of the English coats and made them like a vast and bloody wave, moving with a flicker of wet oar-blades toward invisible Flat Point. In a few minutes they, too, would be hidden by the east shoulder of Coromandière.

But now, like an enormous lobster casting off a claw in some moment of crisis, the west wing of the floating red mass detached itself. For a moment its intention was obscure. The frigate and snow off Coromandière began to fire again with fury. St. Julhien's voice rose in a scream.

"*Dieu!* They come here! Down! Down, all of you!"

He and several other officers ran along the parados, striking at the men's shoulders with the flat of their swords. Into the trenches scrambled the Regiment Artois, yelling with excitement. Someone discharged a musket and at once a ragged but tremendous fusillade spattered the surface of the empty cove like gravel flung into a puddle.

"Hold your fire!" screamed St. Julhien, dancing on the parados with rage. But his regiment was past holding now. With enthusiasm, as fast as they could reload, they poured the fire of a thousand muskets into the blue water of Coromandière. A fog of gray powder-smoke arose and drifted along the face of the trenches on the light morning air.

The English detachment came on at inhuman speed. Plainly the seamen had been saving their strength; now they toiled like demons, bare backs swaying all together, oars lifting and falling with a beautiful precision that must have set old Boscawen's eyes alight. Again Roger had that illusion of insects running over the sea, and they came on with the insensate purpose of insects driven by an instinct for self-destruction.

The foremost boats entered the cove, filled with men in red jackets and tall red caps—grenadiers. There were more behind, grenadiers in hundreds, the grenadier companies of the whole army apparently. Amongst them the figure of Wolfe was plain, his lean six-feet-three upright in a boat stern like a jackstaff. They came straight on into that mortal storm. A cannonball smote one of the leading boats; it stopped in a tangle of oars, wallowed, sank. A dozen heads bobbed, some dark and shining, some still in their white wigs, and one absurd head swam with the mitre cap jammed firmly on the wig, like a small red boat-buoy in an anchorage.

The boats came on. Now another suffered. And another. Now three together, holed and sinking fast. And now the musket balls were finding them. Men twitched, leaped up and dropped over the gunwales, toppled into the sea. The noise was tremendous. Roger's ears pained and set up a high ringing whine of their own, and through it, faint and far, sounded the voice of Fagonde at his elbow. "*Dieu!* This is not war, this is a massacre!"

Behind the grenadiers pressed other boats laden with men in red jackets and blue bonnets—Fraser's men. On the east flank of the attack appeared the buckskin shirts and round caps of the rangers. The smoke was drifting that way, rolling in folds like dirty skeins of wool along the bluff; the spur and the "magpie's nest" were completely hidden. Something he did not recognize, an instinct, a blind urge for action, turned Roger's feet toward the east butte. He began to run.

IT WAS not far. He dashed through the stream and climbed the slope, groping in the acrid smoke for the log platform of the *nid-de-pie*. He bumped into it at last. The post was empty. St. Julhien had gathered every man into the trenches above the beach.

Roger ran down the steep west slope, floundering amongst rocks and stumps. He emerged into sunlight on the shore. To the west the French position was hidden by the smoke and the shoulder of the butte. Seaward swarmed the boats of the attackers, milling uncertainly now. Men in the leading boats were standing up, shouting over their shoulders, pointing to the beach, seeing at last the meaning of that strange forest where the swell broke. All about them the water jumped with flying lead. Roger's eye sought the tall person of Wolfe and found it close in to his right, staring toward the abattis. Suddenly the scarlet arm rose and waved back toward the sea. It repeated the gesture violently and the leading boats began to turn away. There was sound of cheering beyond the smoke, the voice of Artois raised in a shout of victory. But there was no slackening in their fire. Rather it was increased. The Indians had run down from the woods and added their muskets to the fusillade.

Immediately before him and just out of musket-shot Roger noticed a few boats—rangers, light infantry, Highlanders—creeping eastward to avoid the full blast of the French fire. They had not seen Wolfe's signal, or they ignored it. Roger looked at the shore below, a mass of ragged rocks, ice-bitten and sea-beaten, where the long swells broke and flung a wet white lace into the very grass at his feet. There was a nook, not large, wide enough perhaps to pass two boats abreast, and at the head of it a shelf of pebbles. The swell surged in there and rattled the pebbles as it withdrew . . . but it was possible, just possible—by a stretch of imagination, of course. . . .

He looked again at the little knot of boats. The men were staring toward him, one indeed aiming a musket, but Roger's eye was drawn and held by a familiar figure in one of the

approaching whaleboats. It was Tom Fuller.

Roger took off his hat and waved. Tom stared. They all stared. The man with the musket lowered it. Again a wide gesture with the hat, a sweep of arm toward the small gap in the rocks. They did not move.

Behind and above him came the voice of De Gannes, standing in the edge of the smoke drift, calling in a voice cracked with excitement, "Monsieur Sudden! . . . What do you here? *Monsieur le colonel* wishes you to gather the savages at once . . . *Monsieur!*"

Monsieur did not choose to hear. But *Monsieur* had no time to waste. He threw back his head and uttered the war-cry of the rangers, that weird whoop first sounded by Gorham's half-Mohawks in the fighting about Fort Anne. Could they hear it in that hell's din from the trenches above the beach? He uttered the howl again. They turned their faces to each other. Perhaps they considered it a trap. Could they see De Gannes? That young rake was crying now in a bewildered voice, "*Monsieur*, the savages cannot possibly hear you there! Come up here! My colonel wishes—"

Roger leaped upon a great jagged boulder at the water's edge and threw his arms wide. "Tom! Tom! Come in, man! Here! Here!"

There was a decision out there. Tom's boatmen took up their oars and began to row in, cautiously, while Tom stood in the bow, staring, staring. . . .

Suddenly his lips parted, his teeth flashed white. The rowers put their backs into the work. Another boat followed, with two light infantry officers standing upright amongst their men, staring under upraised palms. To their right a boat full of Highlanders moved in eagerly. Still farther to the right, on the edge of that maelstrom where the French shot flew and the retreating boats of the advance force were mingled and confused with those of the main body still pressing on, a number of other craft pointed their noses like questing hounds toward the venturers. By Jove, the thing was done!

But was it? There was De Gannes, an image of outraged astonishment, perched beside the *nid-de-pie* with a pistol in his hand; and behind him, across the shallow ravine, stood the left flank of the Artois, absorbed in the smoke and uproar of its own exertions. Roger turned and scrambled up the bank with eyes fixed on the white face of De Gannes. Slowly, as if fascinated, the lieutenant raised the pistol.

Roger saw the priming flare. The spurt of fire from the muzzle and a violent blow on his chest came together. He staggered backward and nearly fell, the breath knocked out of him. Then he was going on again, on legs that did not seem to belong to him at all. De Gannes was tugging at his sword and crying wildly into the smoke, "*Adjutant! Adjutant! Méfiez-vous! Les Anglais!*"

Roger closed with him, grasped him by the sword-belt. They fell together, struggling. They rolled once or twice. Then Roger's knuckles struck the empty pistol in the grass. He brought it up and smote the elegant white wig four times with the heavy barrel. De Gannes lay on his back, his thin nostrils fluttering.

To the west the cannon and *fusils* thundered as if St. Julhien designed to split the ears of the gods. Wrapped in his own powder smoke, that strutting, gray cockerel was sure of himself, at any rate, already seeing no doubt the Cross of St. Louis with its scarlet ribbon against his fine white coat. Roger looked back. A handful of rangers, light infantry and Highlanders were ashore, swarming over the rocks, and in the surge behind them crowded boat after boat full of men. The boats were lifting and falling frightfully in the surf, smashing to flinders one after another as they got amongst the rocks. The men were leaping out breast-deep and floundering toward the outstretched hands of Tom Fuller and the others. And there was Wolfe himself, poised on a bullet-splintered gunwale for the leap, pointing upward to the *nid-de-pie* with a tasseled cane and shouting.

Most of the muskets were drenched. Already the Highlanders were throwing theirs away and drawing broadswords after their fatal habit. One volley, one rush of bayonets by a disciplined French platoon might yet sweep them all back into the sea. Roger stumbled off along the spur. Every breath stabbed deep beneath his breastbone. He felt a small drip of blood inside his shirt. He turned toward the brook and was carried down the long slope on those strange and desperate legs.

THE dirty canvas of the camp loomed through the powder drift and there was the red flicker of a cooking fire. Half a dozen officers' servants were grouped about it, staring at him open-mouthed. Beyond squatted a little group of squaws and children, oblivious of the battle, waiting stolidly for a chance at the scraping of the ration pots. He ran straight down amongst them, gasping, "Save yourselves! Run! Run! Pass the alarm! The English are between us and the town!"

Would it work? He was not sure and did not seem to care. For several moments they were silent. Then with a scream they raised the *sauve-qui-peut*, scattering toward the trenches, toward the woods, toward the rough track to the town. Roger sank on his knees beside the stream, his chest one great dull agony.

As he crouched there, gasping like a stranded fish, two Indian women came to him swiftly. He heard a cry, "Bosoley!" and felt himself lifted, one at each arm, and dragged away up the ravine amongst the trees. He tried to speak, but his tongue could not furnish the words nor his lungs the breath.

Once they paused to give him rest, on a steep butte charred bare in a bygone forest fire. There was a clear view toward the sea. One of the squaws stretched out a brown sinewy hand, accusingly, as Lot's wife might have pointed to the Cities of the Plain.

"Ankaptaan!"

His blurred vision cleared, seeing the whole of Coromandière as from the gallery of a playhouse. A twist of the wind had blown away the smoke and cleared the stage; and the play had reached its climax. The knoll of the *nid-de-pie* was a red mass of British jackets spreading in ordered ranks along the spur. A flutter of kilts passed rapidly down the slope—Fraser's men, eager to get at the French across the ravine or perhaps to storm the camp in the hollow. The broadswords glittered, and faint and far sounded their Gaelic yell. Still farther along the spur Tom Fuller's rangers moved swiftly toward the road, St. Julhien's only line of retreat, pausing to fire across the ravine. Their buckskins made them well-nigh invisible at this distance, but their progress was marked by the white powder-jets springing from the thickets along the east lip of the hollow. Ranged unevenly along the west of the ravine stood the Regiment Artois, hastily drawn from its trenches to face this red apparition on the flank.

But the *sauve-qui-peut* was at work, the white-clad ranks were swaying in and out, the whole line writhed like an uneasy snake. From the front rank sprang irregular white puffs, and a sound like the crackle of twigs came up to the watchers on the slope. The disciplined red files on the spur, drawn up precisely as Roger had seen them so many times on the shore of Halifax harbor, suddenly spat fire along the whole length, and the smoke rolled up and hid them for a moment.

In that moment Artois broke. St. Julhien's left flank disintegrated, became a scurry of white ants running toward the Louisburg cart-road. The rest followed, throwing to the wind their courage, discipline, even their common sense—for they still outnumbered the redcoats. One steady volley and an ordered advance with the bayonet across the dale would catch Wolfe between devil and deep sea even now—and for the British there was no retreat. The surface of Coromandière was littered with broken boats.

The squaw still held that lean, accusing gesture. *"Menadae!"* she said contemptously, "Cowards!"

Roger, swaying between the women, an arm over each, began to babble in English, "Not fair, you know . . . seen good men run just like that . . . for no more reason. . . . There comes a moment when one cry will do it—one cry, one white-faced man, one finger pointed at the flank. . . . They'll be sorry in the morning—too late then . . . Wolfe . . . roll 'em all up now . . . St. Julhien . . . Marin . . . D'Anthonay. . . ." And then in Micmac, realizing for a moment where he was, ". . . as the slit bark of the canoe-birch yields before the peeling stick."

"El-oo-wa-we," one of the women said, "He is mad."

The other dropped that pointing finger and turned to him a face seamed with weather, hunger, drudgery and something else—a mass of bruises old and new. He stared in horror. How could a woman age twenty years in four? It was Wapke.

She uttered the very words that hovered on his tongue. "O Bosoley, what have they done to thee?"

They eased him down on one of the boulders that shone like teeth in the old fire-barren, and Wapke tore open his waistcoat and shirt. The women cried out together. Chin on breast, Roger saw a great contused patch over his heart, bleeding at the center and turning gradually purple. But the women were not looking at the bruise. Two fragments of stone hung from the ends of the thong about his neck. The little stone fish was shattered.

(To be concluded)

Tired Kidneys Often Bring Sleepless Nights

Doctors say your kidneys contain 15 miles of tiny tubes or filters which help to purify the blood and keep you healthy. When they get tired and don't work right in the daytime, many people have to get up nights. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder. Don't neglect this condition and lose valuable, restful sleep.

When disorder of kidney function permits poisonous matter to remain in your blood, it may also cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness.

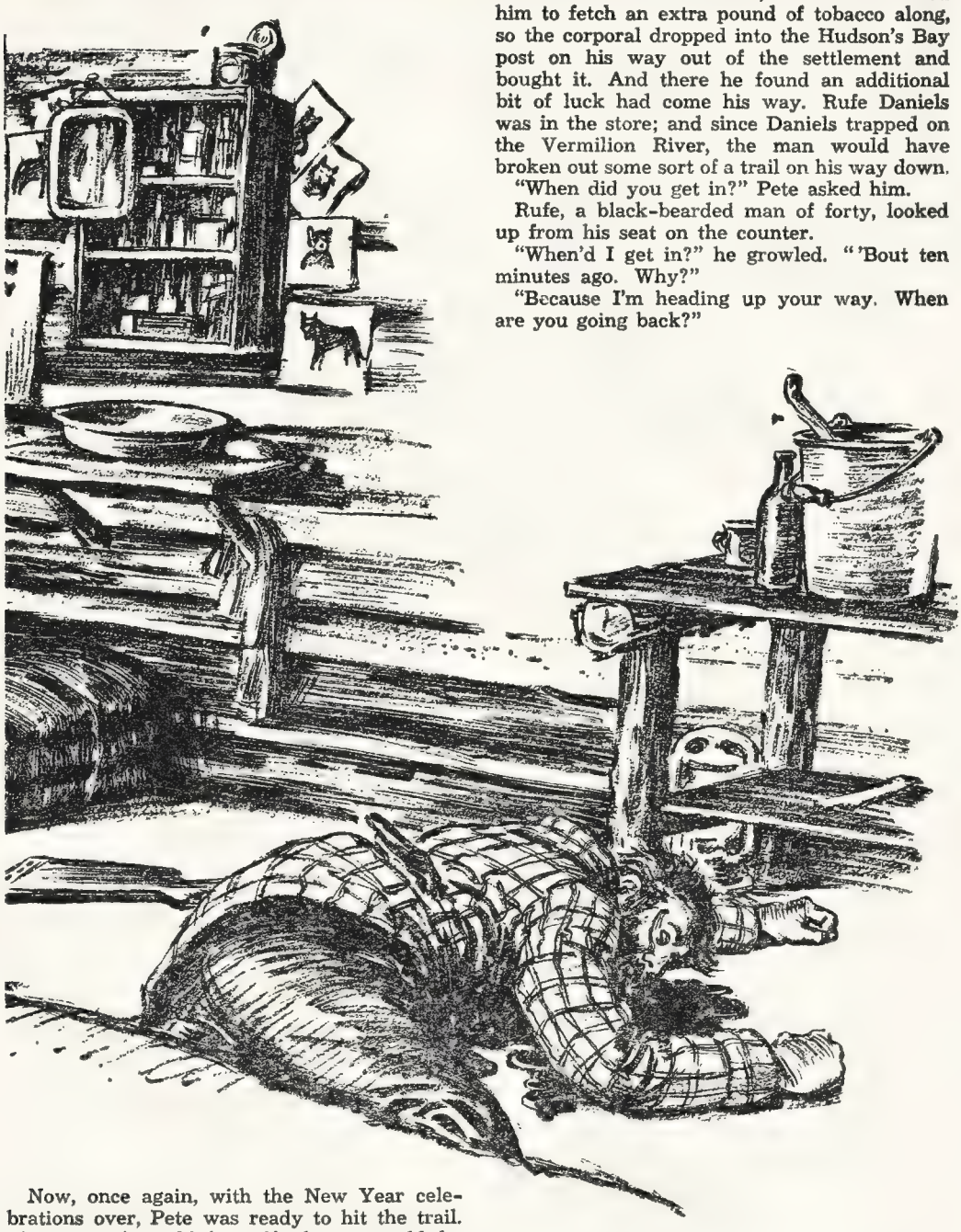
Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, used successfully by millions for over 40 years. They give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills.

THE TIGHT SHOES OF MURDER

By H. S. M. KEMP

ONCE each winter, and preferably right after New Year's, Corporal Pete Lawson made his McKinley Lakes patrol. It was a longish trip which took the better part of three weeks, but in the corporal's estimation it served two useful purposes. It gave him a firsthand picture of how things were going in his district, and it showed the scattered white and Indian population that the Mounted Police were still on the job.

ILLUSTRATED BY MONTE CREWS



The blood on the floor was from a jagged hole in Rufe Daniels' left temple. A .38-55 rifle lay nearby.

Now, once again, with the New Year celebrations over, Pete was ready to hit the trail. This year, he told himself, things would be tougher. There was more snow than usual and fewer people had come down from the north. But on the other hand he wouldn't be traveling alone, as he generally did. Charlie Bear was going with him. And Charlie, a half-breed, was intelligent and a first-class man on the trail.

He would pick Charlie up at his house on Crawfish Lake. Meanwhile, Charlie had asked him to fetch an extra pound of tobacco along, so the corporal dropped into the Hudson's Bay post on his way out of the settlement and bought it. And there he found an additional bit of luck had come his way. Rufe Daniels was in the store; and since Daniels trapped on the Vermilion River, the man would have broken out some sort of a trail on his way down.

"When did you get in?" Pete asked him.

Rufe, a black-bearded man of forty, looked up from his seat on the counter.

"When'd I get in?" he growled. "'Bout ten minutes ago. Why?"

"Because I'm heading up your way. When are you going back?"

"Dunno. In two-three days, I guess. Soon's I get my outfit together."

Rufe Daniels wasn't the conversational sort, but Pete Lawson managed to drag the information from him that fur conditions on the Vermilion were streaky. Some trappers were doing all right, while others wouldn't even make wages.

"But you ain't done too bad." It was old Rod Campbell, the Hudson's Bay man, who spoke. Behind the counter, the trader was grading a sizable pile of fur that pretty well covered the counter top. "Nice a bunch of fur as I've seen this winter."

If Rufe Daniels was flattered he gave no sign of it. Elbows on knees and feet swinging, the man sucked broodingly at his cigarette. Corporal Pete Lawson glanced at him curiously. Then old Rod Campbell spoke.

"Seems like I got a letter for you, Rufe. It come in airmail." The trader turned to the shelves behind him, pulled out a sheaf of letters and tossed one onto the counter.

Pete Lawson, standing nearby, caught the airmail sticker and noticed that the envelope was marked "Urgent." Further, it seemed to be from a business firm, for the address was typewritten. But after a hesitant scowl at the thing, Rufe Daniels crammed it into his mackinaw pocket.

"And mebbe you got some liquor for me, too?" he suggested. "I ordered her in last fall."

"I've got her," Campbell assured him. "Six forty-ounce crocks of Scotch."

Pete Lawson smiled inwardly. Apparently the urgency of his mail worried Rufe Daniels less than the safety of his liquor. Old Rod Campbell must have reasoned along similar lines, for he asked, "Didn't you notice that letter? It was marked 'Urgent.'"

Daniels gave another grunt, then a look of sudden ferocity blazed in his eyes. "So what about it? Figure it won't keep?"

The trader blinked. "I . . . I don't know. I guess so. I thought p'rhaps you hadn't noticed."

"Well, I had, see?" Daniels continued to glower at the trader, then turned to dig out a match for his dead cigarette.

Pete Lawson frowned. The sudden flare-up on Rufe Daniels' part seemed so senseless. "Bushed as a jack-rabbit!" he muttered.

Daniels heard him. "Whaddya say?"

"Aw, g'wan!" said Pete. "Light your fag."

After a moment Daniels demanded, "What you headin' up to see me for?"

"I didn't say I was," corrected Pete. "I said I was heading up your way."

Daniels digested this. "Well," he said, grudgingly, "y' should have a pretty fair trail. That is, as far as my place on the Vermilion."

"Should, eh?" Pete noted. "Guess I'll need a few good trails before I get back." Rufe Daniels seemed to have cooled off somewhat, so the policeman picked up the can of tobacco and his mitts. "And if I'm going, I might as well make a start."

HIS ROAD ran straight northeast, and for the first part was well traveled. But at twenty below and with a sharp headwind, the dogs became white-rimmed with frost and a ring of the stuff formed about the corporal's parka-hood. He was glad when at the end of eighteen miles he was able to duck into Charlie Bear's for a smoke and a hot cup of tea.

Charlie seemed to be waiting for him, but he had a visitor. The visitor was an Indian, sitting over the stove and smoking a pipe. Charlie's Indian mother was baking a batch of bannock, while his sister, a dark, handsome girl of twenty, worked an elaborate silkwork pattern on a pair of moosehide slippers. Charlie said he'd be ready as soon as he harnessed his dogs, but first the corporal might care to hear what Tom Garson had to say.

Garson was the Indian, who related a story of terrorism that seemed to be sweeping the country on both sides of the Vermilion River. According to the native's account, men were being shot at, their traps rifled and, as a result, their women-folk scared to death. Garson hedged at naming any direct suspect, but believed that it could only be the work of a white man. And the only white men in that locality were Slim Newton, Jake Shafer and Rufe Daniels.

"You can rule out Slim Newton," grinned Charlie Bear. "Come Easter, he'll be my brother-in-law."

The girl glanced up from her silkwork, smiled, then dropped her eyes again.

Pete had the Indian tell his story in more detail. At its conclusion, he asked him, "What's the reason for all this trouble? Just devilment?"

The man didn't think so. He had his own theory. His people trapped in a rich beaver district, and as beaver-trapping was going to be opened in the spring, someone was trying to scare them out in order to grab the country for himself.

Pete Lawson knew the Vermilion country, and he was acquainted with Slim Newton. But Rufe Daniels he had only encountered twice, and Jake Shafer not at all. He knew that Shafer had his hangout near the headwaters of the Vermilion, that Rufe Daniels' camp was thirty miles downstream from there, and that Slim Newton's camp was at the junction of the Vermilion and the Otter and near the McKinley Lakes trail.

The corporal turned to Charlie Bear. "If there's anything to this yarn, it'd pay to check up on both Rufe Daniels and Jake Shafer. I could go back and tackle Daniels now, but I'd just as soon go ahead now I've started, and contact him at his camp on the way home. With

Rufe allowed that fur conditions on the Vermilion were streaky. Some trappers were doing all right, while others wouldn't even make wages.

half a dozen crocks of hooch to take care of, he probably won't be there for a week."

The halfbreed nodded. "Yeah. And we could swing around and see Jake Shafer on the way up. Though I wouldn't waste too much time on him. He's got good enough country, himself. But Rufe Daniels—That guy's half-crazy, anyhow."

The corporal set his cup on the table and pulled out the makings of a cigarette. "What sort of a guy is this Shafer? He pulled into the country while I was out in town."

"Shafer?" The halfbreed gave a contemptuous shrug. "Pretty much all mouth. He came down here two-three times while I was on the trapline. Last time he wanted to camp, but the women wouldn't hear of it. He got sore, then.

Said if it was Slim Newton, he coulda had any bed in the place." The girl bent her head lower over her silkwork. "I'd have got him for that," the halfbreed went on. "Only when I told Slim Newton about it, Slim said to leave Jake Shafer to him."

"And what happened?"

"Dunno. I haven't seen Slim since."

Pete Lawson lit his cigarette and stood up. "We'll check up on Mr. Shafer." He turned to the Indian, added, "And if you're going into the settlement, keep what you've told me to yourself."

So instead of making straight for the McKinley Lakes, they swung more to the east. That night they camped in an Indian shack, where Pete, sprawled on his robes on the spruce-bough floor, gained additional information concerning the mysterious goings-on.

And not only information, but direct evidence. The Indian showed him a tea-kettle with a hole in it. The man had been hunched over a night-fire in the bush when the shot had not only ruined the kettle but had flung scalding tea in his face. Another man, he was told, had had a meat-cache destroyed and three of his seven sleigh-dogs poisoned.

Pete glanced toward Charlie Bear. "Yeah, it's worth looking into."

The second night they camped with Jake Shafer.

Shafer proved to be a barrel of a man, who threatened to talk them to death before the evening was over. He was thick-lipped and sweaty-looking, but Pete couldn't picture him as the man behind all the trouble. But before he turned in for the night he mentioned the matter to Shafer and asked him what he knew about it.

Shafer didn't know a lot. "I don't savvy the Indian lingo, and only a few of 'em talk English. But seems like I did hear somep'n about a guy gettin' shot at. South of Rufe Daniels' camp, I think it was."

"And that's all you know?"

"All of it," stated Shafer. "So help me!"

THEY pulled out at dawn of the day following and headed down the Vermilion. At three in the afternoon they reached Rufe Daniels' cabin. The building was a log-and-mud affair that provided from the outside little of interest, so they wasted no time on it. And at seven that evening, and following the river, they reached Slim Newton's.

Slim himself wasn't home, but the cabin was unlocked. They cooked supper, fed the dogs, then held a debate on what their next move should be.

"I figure," said Pete, "that Rufe Daniels won't be home for another five or six days. If we go up to the McKinley Lakes, we won't be back for ten. That'll give him another five days to play the *weetigo* and raise the devil generally."

"Yeah," said Charlie. "And if we hit south for the post at once, we may miss him. He may come back the way we did, or swing around here by Slim's."

Pete's hard-chipped face drew into a scowl. "Tell you," he said after a pause. "We could go north as far as the Long Portage and check over the Nitchies there. We wouldn't be gone more than five days altogether."

They finally agreed on the plan, but failed to take into consideration trail conditions. For it snowed intermittently for those next five days, and it wasn't until the evening of the sixth that they found themselves back at Slim Newton's. This time, Slim was home.

Slim was an overseas man, a veteran of the Dieppe affair. He carried a chunk of shrapnel in his back and walked with the suggestion of a limp. He was tall, spare, red-headed, and in age somewhere around twenty-eight or thirty. As Pete walked in, the man gave him a cordial greeting, but to Pete the cordiality sounded somewhat forced.

"Not putting you out, am I?" inquired Pete.

"Gosh, no!" protested Newton. "Always room for one more in a dump like this." He grabbed frying pan and kettle. "I'll get you a bite to eat right away."

The corporal and Charlie unharnessed the dogs and carried in their gear. While they were shedding their trail-clothes, Slim Newton asked, "You fellers goin' some place or just comin' back?"

"Coming back," said Pete. "Been up to see how the Long Portage crowd are getting along."

Slim turned the steaks in the frying pan. "Dirty travelin' weather. I just got back myself. Been over west to Fox Lake."

The corporal took a seat on an upturned box. "Seen anything of Rufe Daniels lately?"

Slim shook his head. "Ain't seen him for months. Never go up his way."

"Then you wouldn't know if he was home?"

"Guess he's home all right. I saw a fresh toboggan track headin' upriver. Though it could have been Jake Shafer's."

The corporal gave a grunt. "He didn't stay long in the village."

Nothing more was said, and soon Slim had the supper prepared. Later in the evening, the policeman and Charlie went out to feed the dogs and found with disgust that it was beginning to snow again. When they came in, Pete Lawson said he was ready for bed.

Bed meant half a dozen caribou skins thrown on the floor with the corporal's traveling robes on top of them. He was up at dawn and told Slim that he and Charlie were going upriver to call on Rufe Daniels. He also asked if it would be all right if they came back and camped with him again that evening.

Slim hesitated, said yes, but he figured that forty miles over fresh snow would be quite a

hike. "Unless," he added, "you took the portage over the Big Bend. That cuts off six miles."

Charlie Bear asked if they were using the portage this year. "After the fire that went through there last summer, I figured she'd be piled up with wind-slash."

"I wouldn't know, then," said Slim. "But we used to come down that way before the war."

Charlie Bear nodded. "That's Slim's old trapping-ground, where Rufe Daniels is now. He grabbed it while Slim was overseas."

The corporal said, "Oh?"

"But I'm not worrying," said Slim. "I didn't lose on the deal."

Charlie Bear gave a grunt. "Says you! You lost plenty!"

They finished breakfast. Pete Lawson and Charlie carried out their duffle and harnessed the dogs. Leaning against the house was a new toboggan, its high, curled head painted a vivid blue.

"Nice sleigh you got there," observed Charlie.

Slim nodded. "The only one old Weenusk turned this year."

A stinging headwind greeted them as they hit the river, and by the time they reached the Big Bend they decided to tackle the portage and chance what they might find.

But their fears were set at rest. Not only was the portage clear of slash but it looked to have been recently traveled. Then suddenly, halfway across it and at a sharp turn, the corporal stopped his dogs and walked back.

At his yell, Charlie came back too. He found the corporal looking at a spot on a birch, two or three feet above the ground.

Charlie looked too. "Paint," he said. "Where a toboggan-head hit, goin' around the turn. Blue paint," he added. "Probably Slim's."

Pete took off his mitt and rubbed the spot. "That isn't old. And Slim said he hadn't been over this portage since before the war."

"Then likely Rufe Daniels," suggested Charlie.

"No. Rufe's sleigh never was painted. I saw it outside the Hudson's Bay the day I left. And Jake Shafer's wasn't painted, either."

They went on again, and did not stop until they pulled up outside Rufe Daniels' cabin. There, the man's four big huskies came toward them threateningly, but there was no sign of Daniels himself.

"Still pickled," guessed the corporal. He banged on the door and pushed it open.

But he only took one step inside. For sprawled on the floor was Rufe Daniels, face-down in a puddle of his own blood.

THE CORPORAL stood there for a moment, staring. Charlie Bear crowded him. "My gosh!" breathed the halfbreed. They went in together.

The blood on the floor was from a jagged hole in Rufe Daniels' left temple. A smaller hole was in the right. Around this hole was the black mark of a powder-burn. A .38-55 rifle lay by the dead man's side.

Pete Lawson gave a grunt. "Well, he made a workmanlike job of it."

In the doorway, Pete's leader, a tawny-yellow husky, strained at his collar, sniffed, made whimpering noises in his throat. Pete kicked the door shut and suggested that Charlie throw on a fire in the heater.

"Cold in here. And we won't be leaving right away."

Then he gave the body his attention.

It was stiff, but this was more from rigor mortis than the frost. It lay as though it had fallen on its face from a sitting position on the rough pole bunk. Pete's eye traveled to where the bark had been chipped from one of the logs of the wall. He walked over, prodded in the hole with the tip of his jackknife and felt the grate of metal against metal.

"Have to gouge that out," he muttered. "With an axe."

Next he picked up the .38-55 with his mittened fingers. The exploded shell was still in the chamber. He laid the gun on the bunk, stood back and looked around him.

Rufe Daniels' shack was a run-of-the-mill trapping camp, and save for an almost Spartan barrenness of comforts, it differed little from scores of others he had seen. It was low-pitched, small and dirty, but a tiny radio set stood on a ledge beneath the window and the walls were decorated with a number of black-and-white sketches. These latter had been done on bits of cardboard and showed more than a little talent. Three were of animals, one was the head of a moose, and the rest depicted Northern life and landscapes.

"Pretty fair sketching," Pete observed. "In fact, for a locoed trapper like Rufe, it's blamed good."

Rufe had carried his flair for art a bit further. On the wall was a large tally-card of his hunt, and on this the man had put in considerable time. A dozen animals had been drawn with startling likeness, and against these Rufe Daniels had marked his kills to date.

Pete viewed the card with interest, for it showed that when Rufe Daniels took over Slim Newton's trapping-ground, he had stepped into a good thing.

"Lynx, otter, mink, all kinds of weasels and the Lord knows how many foxes. I'll add 'em up some time."

Pete then turned to Charlie Bear, warming his hands over the heater. "Well, what d'you make of it?"

The halfbreed shrugged. "You mean, why did he shoot himself?"

"All right. That'll do for a start."

"Hard to say," admitted Charlie. "He was half crazy to begin with, and he'd been drinkin'.

Mebbe he was the one behind this *weetigo* business, and when he knew you were pokin' around—"

"Whoa! How did he know I was poking around? Who'd tell him?" Pete reminded the halfbreed.

"That's right," said Charlie. "Only ones who knew anything about it were my folks and Tom Garson. But they wouldn't talk, and it ain't very likely that Rufe even stopped there comin' by. Mebbe he was just suspicious."

The corporal took another turn of the place, then concentrated his attention on the bullet-hole in the wall. A moment later he went out and fetched in his own rifle, a Winchester .303.

"Just a little experiment," he told Charlie Bear. He pumped out the shells and handed Charlie the gun.

"Now then," he said, "you're going to commit suicide. It'll have to be you. I've got a bee in my bonnet and I'd be prejudiced. So sit down there on the edge of the bunk and do as Rufe did—go through the motions of blowing out your brains."

Charlie grinned. "Sure."

He took the Winchester, sat down, hooked his thumb through the trigger-guard and shoved the muzzle against his temple.

"Hold it!" ordered Pete.

The corporal was smiling. "Just what I wanted. See what I mean? If the gun was loaded and you pulled the trigger, the bullet would tear through your temple and take off the top of your head. For that's the way you're holding the gun. Savvy?"

The halfbreed nodded, though he did not completely understand.

"Try it the other way, then," suggested Pete. "Hold the gun against your head, but out level this time."

Charlie did, then lowered it. "I get you now, all right."

"Sure," agreed Pete. "So when you find bullet-holes in a straight line through a man's head and the bullet itself straight on, you begin to wonder. Either, you say, Rufe Daniels was pretty strong to hold a heavy .38-55 out from his head like that, or else there's something screwy about the whole thing."

"Yeah," said Charlie, then again, "yeah." He was frowning, for in following the corporal's reasoning he saw the implications.

But Pete Lawson did not want him to dwell on them. He glanced around the cabin again, said, "Makes you wonder why all these trappers don't go nuts. Look at this layout of Rufe's—no one to talk to, nothing to read, and a radio that's probably on the blink." He tried it, and when nothing happened, shook his head again. "Corker!"

But a certain stubborn expression was on the halfbreed's face. "You ain't worryin' about how Rufe kept goin'. You're thinkin' about a blue paint-mark on a tree."

PETE LAWSON decided to face the issue. "O.K., then, I am. And to be frank about it, I'm thinking, too, of Slim Newton. I figure that right here we've a murder case to deal with, and it's too bad I can't forget Slim. He certainly lied when he said he didn't know anything about the portage over the Big Bend, for the blue paint-mark gave him away."

"Could have been an old one," put in Charlie.

"Couldn't. Dunno whether you noticed it or not, but the outside bark on that birch had been singed and curled up by the fire that went through last summer. If that blue smear was old, you wouldn't have seen it. It would have been on that curled-up roll of bark."

Charlie's face was sober. He recognized the soundness of the corporal's reasoning.

"And another thing," Pete went on. "Something told me when I walked into Slim's shack last night that he wasn't too tickled to see me. I felt it. And then, when Rufe Daniels seems to have made the best hunt around here, why should Slim say he lost nothing by having Daniels crowd him out? I know why—to build up the impression that he bore Daniels no ill-will."

"O.K., then," challenged the halfbreed. "So you're satisfied. You figure it was Slim that killed him."

Pete allowed the challenge to pass. "I figure I'll look around some more."

His first move was to go through the dead man's pockets. And here again he saw that letter marked, "Urgent"—the one that old Rod Campbell had handed over at the post. It was now opened, but proved to be something of a disappointment. It came from a hardware firm in Winnipeg and returned a pencil-written order for ten boxes of .38-55 shells that Rufe Daniels had ordered. Beneath the pencil scrawl were two words in red ink: *Permit required.*

"So that's that," grunted Pete, and switched his attention again to the cabin.

On the wall was a soapbox-cupboard which contained a few items of interest: some half-finished sketches, a crib-board and a dirty pack of cards, and a piece of paper whereon a score had been kept of one of the cribbage games. Apparently the game had been between Rufe Daniels and Jake Shafer, for these two names headed the lists. Rufe seemed to have won, and thereafter Jake Shafer had amused himself trying to copy Rufe Daniels' hen-scrawl signature.

"And he didn't make much of a go of it," grunted Pete. "As a forger, he'd have been a flop."

So much for the cupboard; but beneath it, on the floor, was a battered and rusty tin trunk. Pete unsnapped the catches on the thing but the lid refused to yield. After his second unsuccessful attempt, Pete said to Charlie, "That butcher-knife on the table—let's have it."

But the butcher-knife broke, and Pete slung it across the room in disgust. "If I could find a screw driver . . ."

He got to his feet to search for one, and found Charlie scowling at a crumpled piece of paper he held in his hand. Glancing over the halfbreed's shoulder, he gave a frown himself. For the crumpled piece of paper was a letter that was headed "Dear Jake."

Pete Lawson read on.

I am going down to the post, and I don't know if I will be back. I hear Slim Newton says he is going to get me if I stay here, and theres no use looking for trouble. Anyways I always wanted to try the Reindeer Lake country so if I am not here after Jan 10 you will know whats up. And I will write you when I get setled.

Rufe

Charlie took the Winchester from the corporal, sat down, hooked his thumb through the trigger-guard and shoved the muzzle against his temple.

Pete sprung the jaws and when the fox dropped to the floor he held the trap against the light, eyed it closely. "Newhouse," he agreed.

Pete possessed himself of the note, asked "Where d'you get it?"

"Right there on the table," replied Charlie. "Like it was slung away."

Pete read the note once more. "Yeah, slung away. But Rufe *did* come back, and Jake *didn't* call while he was away. But then Jake couldn't have got the letter anyway. The shack was locked."

"Prob'ly Rufe stuck the note up outside. Or maybe Jake has a key to his pal's shack." The halfbreed gave a sudden harsh laugh. "Rufe 'hears' Slim Newton's out to get him. That proves he was crazy! Them half-bushed scissorbills are always hearin' things!"

But Pete was comparing the handwriting of the letter with the ammunition order that Rufe Daniels had had returned from Winnipeg.

"Rufe's writing," he grunted. "And that don't help Slim."

"Don't help Slim?" echoed the halfbreed. "You mean it'll hurt him? My good gosh!" he went on. "It's goin' some when a goof like Daniels can scribble a few lines on a bit of paper and put a rope 'round some other guy's neck!"

"Take her easy," suggested Pete. "Let's have another crack at that trunk."

This time, with the aid of an axe, the thing was opened. It contained a couple of wolfskins and the frozen unskinned carcass of a red fox.

Pete picked up the fox, and stared hard at the trap that was still clamped to one of its forelegs.

"What d'you make of this?"

Charlie, still ill-humored, said he couldn't make anything of it. "Unless," he added, "Rufe chucked it in there till he had time to fix it up."

But the corporal didn't agree. "That don't make sense. More than likely he stole it some place. And that backs up those Indian yarns. As for the wolves—well, they could be stolen, too. If they weren't, why didn't he take 'em down to the post with the rest of his fur?"

Charlie gave a grunt, then looked at the corporal curiously.

"You're huntin' for a guy who could have committed the murder. You figure it's Slim. What's the matter with one of the Nitchies doin' it? They had a score to settle."

"Could be," agreed Pete Lawson. "But I want a talk with Slim Newton first. So let's get going," he ordered.

They left Rufe Daniels in the cabin, but took his dogs along with them. They also took the fur, the frozen fox, and Daniels' .38-55 wrapped in a blanket and handled carefully.

THEY reached Slim Newton's camp well after dark.

"Well," remarked Slim, as they walked in, "you got back."

If Pete had noticed a certain oddness in Slim's attitude on his earlier visit, he found it now more pronounced than ever. The man sounded flannel-tongued, and he was stooped over shoving wood into the stove as he said it.

"Yeah, we got back," agreed Pete. "And we got back hungry. How's the stock-pot?"

Slim sneaked a glance at him. "No stock-pot, but the steaks are holdin' out." Then he asked, "How's Rufe Daniels?"

Pete turned to Charlie Bear, crowding in with the robes from the toboggans. "That a boy! Sling 'em there on the bed."

With his question ignored, Slim glanced oddly at the corporal. As Pete turned, he looked away. Nor did he refer to Rufe Daniels again.

For his part, the corporal talked commonplaces with Charlie Bear, and when the meal was ready, he pulled an empty box up to the table. Slim took the bunk, with a cigarette.

Halfway through the meal, Pete Lawson said, "Nice sleigh you got out there, Slim. Who did the paint job?"

Slim looked hesitant. "Why—I did, of course."

"Uh-huh." The corporal speared a chunk of bannock. "Then there must be another blue-

headed sleigh in the country. One was over the Big Bend portage not so long ago."

A swift, startled expression swept Slim Newton's face. "Well, it wasn't mine."

In silence, the corporal resumed his supper. But the silence was studied, planned. It was part of a war of nerves, a scheme to keep Slim Newton guessing. Ten minutes later the corporal remarked, "About Rufe Daniels— We saw him, all right, but he didn't see us. The guy was dead."

Slim swallowed, with difficulty. "Dead? You mean—he's been killed?"

Pete Lawson cocked an eyebrow. "Killed, y'say? Can't a guy die without being killed?"

Slim nodded. "Sure. Sure. Only the way you said it, that's what I thought you meant."

Followed another long silence, broken only by the clatter of knife and fork or the stirring of a spoon in a cup.

"Speaking of guys getting killed . . ." observed the corporal, and he launched into a story of a murder of some years before up at Fond du Lac. He stressed the seeming smartness of the killer but portrayed him as a sniveling weakling when circumstances began to weave a rope around his neck. Then he abruptly dropped the subject to talk about the weather.

Slim Newton's nerves began to show the effect of Pete's tactics. The man couldn't remain still. He got up, poked at the fire, rolled a cigarette but threw it away after a few hasty puffs. Charlie Bear, too, showed signs of strain. He had finished his supper and now sat on the bunk beside Slim Newton. His eyes smoldered and his moccasined feet swung nervously.

But Pete Lawson seemed pleased with himself. On the empty box, with a match for a toothpick, he faced the other two and returned to the subject of murder.

"Yes, sir, it never fails. Your murderer'll give himself away every time. Like that coot I was telling you about, that bird up at Fond du Lac. He figured he'd covered up nicely, thought he was pretty smart. But that's why hangmen pay income-taxes—because *all* murderers think they're smart."

Suddenly, Slim Newton blew up. He swung on the corporal, fists clenched and eyes blazing.

"Quit it!" he yelled. "If you figure I killed Rufe Daniels, come out and say so!"

Pete looked at the man steadily. His own face was hard.

"All right, then I *will* say it. You killed Rufe Daniels."

Slim began to tremble, then he went all to pieces. He shook his head, wet his lips.

"I didn't kill him! I was up there—sure, I was up there, and I lied about it. I saw him on the floor. Somebody had killed him before I came along!"

Pete Lawson stared. "Killed him before you came along?" He gave a sudden harsh chuckle. "D'you figure I'm going to swallow a yarn like that?"

Slim's hands waved in helplessness. "I dunno. It sounds funny. But it's the truth!"

"Is, eh?" Pete gave a grunt. "Then what took you up there?"

"To see Daniels. To beat the can off him. He stole a fox of mine."

A fox. Pete remembered the one in Rufe Daniels' trunk, the one that was now lying up above his head on the flat roof of Slim's camp.

"A fox," Pete repeated. "One he stole off you, you say?"

"Sure. He passed here two days ago, going home. I followed him up the river the next morning to visit a fox-trap about a mile away. When I got to the set I saw where somebody had left his dogs and walked over to it. It was gone, trap and all. And I knew it could only be Rufe Daniels."

"Uh-huh. And you'd actually caught a fox there?"

"Sure. It had snowed some, but I got eyes."

Pete ruminated on the story. "Anything special about this trap?"

"No—unless because it's a Newhouse. A Number Two. Most fellers in this country use Victors."

Pete got up, went out, came back in again with the fox and the trap in his hand. He sprung the jaws, and when the fox dropped to the floor he held the trap against the light. "Newhouse," he agreed, and sat down.

HE ROLLED a cigarette but did not light it immediately. He leaned back against the table, hooked thumbs in his suspenders and suggested that Slim Newton go ahead and tell the rest of his yarn.

"It isn't a yarn," persisted Slim. "It's the honest truth! I barged into the cabin, and found him on the floor. Gosh, it took my breath away! He was dead, and there was blood all 'round him. Then I got scared. I didn't know who killed him, but if I was found in the cabin, I'd be on the spot. So I came out quick and hit for home."

"Just like that, eh? You saw him lying there, saw the blood and the gun—"

"But there wasn't a gun!" broke in Slim. "That's how I knew it was murder. And I hadn't got very far on the road home before I figured I was on the spot anyway. I'd had more than one row with the guy, and with him stealin' my trapping-grounds people'd say I brooded over it and bumped him off. And so far as any alibi went, I hadn't a leg to stand on."

"So?" prompted Pete.

"So I went back and fixed it so that it would look like suicide."

Pete was scowling. "*You* did?"

"Sure. I knew the real murderer wouldn't talk, and it seemed the only thing to do. So

when I got back to the cabin I took his .38-55 outside, shot a bullet into the ground and laid the gun down beside him."

"In other words," said Pete, coldly, "you fabricated evidence?"

Slim Newton swallowed hard. "It was either that or swing for a job I didn't do."

Pete gave a queer little grunt. This story of Slim's backed up the theory of his own, that Rufe Daniels' "suicide" was plain murder. But believing the rest of the man's story was something else. He turned to him again.

"If you say you didn't kill the guy, who did?"

Slim shook his head. "I wouldn't know."

"But didn't you see any tracks around the place? A man couldn't walk into a cabin and walk out again without leaving tracks of some sort."

"There were tracks," Slim admitted, "but they were under the new snow. And toboggan tracks, coming down from the north. But I figured they were yours, because you camped here one night."

Well, mused Pete, they could have been. He and Charlie had not only come down from the north but they had poked around the cabin and tried to look in the window. But if this were the case and the tracks were his and Charlie's, Slim Newton was still out on a limb.

But was he? Couldn't someone else have come down from the north? It was the cursed snow again, covering everything, baffling Pete Lawson at each turn he took. A dozen men might have come down, and if they had all used the one trail, the couple inches of snow that had recently fallen would protect them.

But there weren't a dozen men to come down from the north, at least not over that trail. In fact, there could be only one—Jake Shafer. And Jake Shafer, for all his talk and his irritating manner, would hardly appear to be the murderer.

For one thing, he'd nothing to gain. By what Pete had learned, Jake Shafer had made a fair hunt himself. Then, too, he was a pal of Rufe Daniels—in fact, Rufe's only pal. But this aspect of the case didn't worry Pete Lawson a lot. Men had killed their pals before and they would do it again. It wasn't till some hidden motive came to light that the police could appraise a killing at its true value.

The crash of a stove-lid snapped him out of his musing. Slim was firing up. When he was done, the man stood there, waiting for Pete's next move.

So Pete went at him again. He cross-examined him, sweated him, but got little else out of him besides his original story.

"Well," he said at last, "if that's your yarn, I'll guess you'll stick to it. So we might as well get some sleep."

As on the previous night, he and Charlie spread their robes on the caribou-skins on the floor. Charlie had said little all evening, and now, his final cigarette finished, the halfbreed pulled the robes around his shoulders and rolled over onto his side. But an hour afterward, Pete knew his partner was still awake. So was Slim Newton. Slim twisted and turned on his bunk, and Pete realized the torture that was going on in his mind. Well, a certain amount of torture was good for any man. He learned lessons from it.

Pete himself wasn't tortured, but he was very much puzzled. There were so many pros and cons to this case. Frankly, in his own heart, he believed Slim Newton's story. The man didn't look like a killer, and Pete, who knew a lot about killers, didn't think that Slim had the killer's outlook. But if Slim wasn't the killer, who was?

His mind flitted to the letter found on Rufe Daniels' table. It irked him. It seemed genuine but was too incriminating. It could even pass for a deliberate plant. Then there were those two wolf-pelts. If Daniels had contemplated a shift to the Reindeer country, why should he go off and leave thirty dollars' worth of fur in the shack? The two things, the letter and the fur, didn't jibe. And that made him wonder more than ever if Slim had been framed.

But who'd want to frame him? Who had it in for him? Pete suddenly had a recollection. What about Charlie Bear's sister, the girl Slim was going to marry? And who was it who, when put out of a house, had remarked that if it had been Slim he could have had any bed in the place?

Thinking of Jake Shafer, Pete's mind leaped onward. Disjointed facts took on grim significance—the damaging letter and the attempts to forge Rufe Daniels' name, Rufe's flare-up with old Rod Campbell in the store and the returned ammunition order.

Pete marveled that he had been so blind.

IT WAS the better part of a two-day trip back to Jake Shafer's. Shafer gave evidence of a bit of a shock at seeing them but got over it and invited them in.

"You fellers been gone quite a while," he remarked.

"Sure have," agreed Pete Lawson. "Checking up, y'know. And right now I'd like to check up on your trapping license. Got it handy?"

Pete and Charlie stood in the low cabin while Jake Shafer rummaged in a dilapidated club-bag.

"Here she is. And all signed up."

Pete squinted at the signature, then dug into his pocket. From the pocket he produced the cribbage-score he had found in Rufe Daniels' shack. He compared the two, while Shafer watched the proceedings with mystification.

"Anything wrong with it?" he asked.

"Not a thing," grinned Pete. "In fact, every-

thing's quite all right." He slipped both papers into his pocket again, but Shafer pointed out his error.

"Not the license," he protested. "I need that."

"Not any more you won't. 'Tween you'n me," said Pete, "you're under arrest for murder."

Jake Shafer recoiled as though slapped in the face. "M-murder?" he stammered. "Whose?"

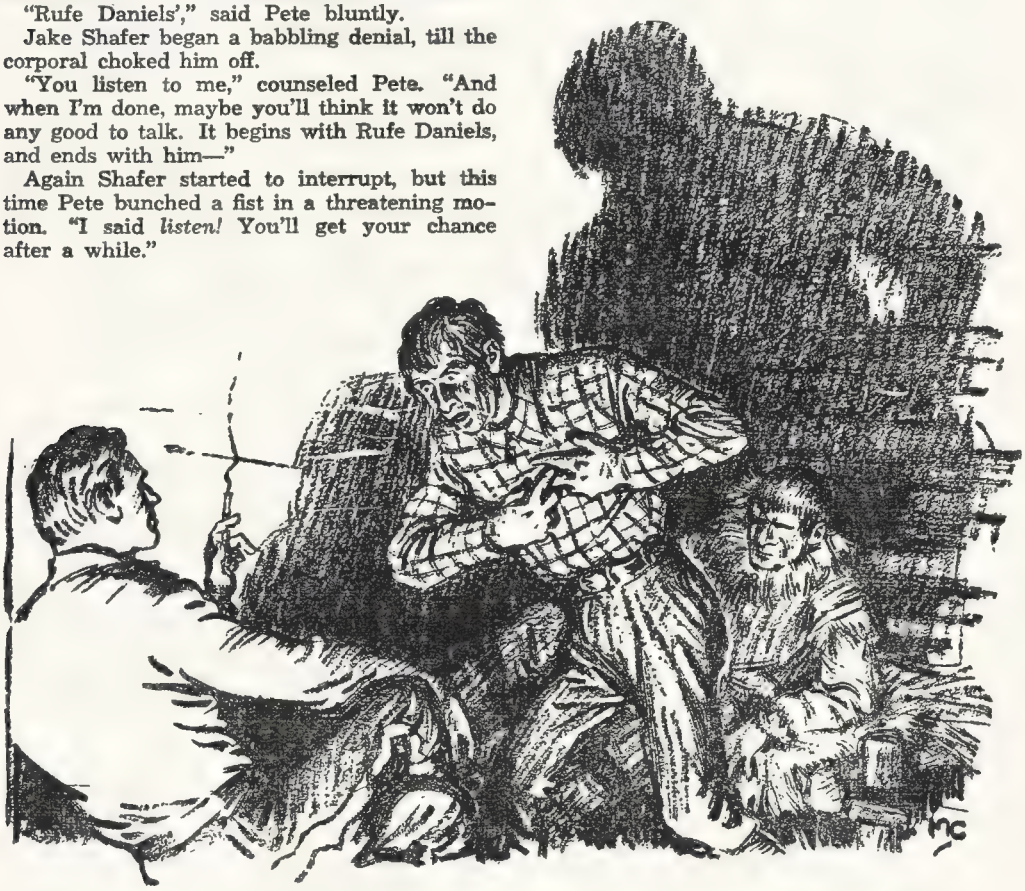
"Rufe Daniels'," said Pete bluntly.

Jake Shafer began a babbling denial, till the corporal choked him off.

"You listen to me," counseled Pete. "And when I'm done, maybe you'll think it won't do any good to talk. It begins with Rufe Daniels, and ends with him—"

Again Shafer started to interrupt, but this time Pete bunched a fist in a threatening motion. "I said *listen!* You'll get your chance after a while."

reading-matter in Rufe's? What did the practicing of his signature on an old cribbage-score mean? And why was the only actual piece of writing in the place a certain letter he was supposed to have written to you? I'll tell you why. Because, when you come down to bedrock, Rufe Daniels couldn't read or write!"



Slim stuck to his original story no matter how much the corporal sweated him.

He started again. "I almost arrested Slim Newton for Rufe's murder, for a letter fooled me. It was a letter that hinted that Rufe—on account of Slim—was going around in fear of his life. But several things cropped up that started me asking questions." For Shafer's benefit, he related the scene in the Hudson's Bay post when old Rod Campbell had drawn Rufe Daniels' attention to the urgency of his mail. "Rufe's getting mad looked funny at the time, and it looked funnier afterwards. Other things looked funny, too. I'll name 'em—or ask you them. Why did Rufe draw pictures on his tally-card instead of putting his hunt down in writing? Why, with every other trapping-camp cluttered with old magazines, was there no

Jake Shafer blinked, and started another jumble of words. Again Pete choked him off.

"Yeah, Rufe could neither read nor write. So he didn't open that 'Urgent' letter that old Rod Campbell gave him because it wouldn't have done him any good if he had. Moreover, he was blamed touchy about his illiteracy, and half-bushed besides. And as for what I found in the shack, that's easily explained. You did his letter-writing for him, even to making up that ammunition order from Winnipeg. That cribbage-score, too, was your work; for the 'Jake' and 'Rufe' that you wrote at the head of it are identical with the 'Rufe' on the letter and the 'Jake' part of your signature on your trapping license. But the repeated copying of

the 'Rufe Daniels' on the crib-score wasn't your work but the pathetic attempts of Rufe to get the hang of signing his own name."

Pete's face went suddenly savage and hard. "As for murdering Rufe, that was dirty enough, but it was a whole lot dirtier trying to hang the killing on Slim. You knew he and Rufe didn't get along, so you figured that if you wrote a letter incriminating him, you'd have him cold. So there you were. With a first-class motive for Slim doing murder, you looked after the rest. You killed Rufe with a .38 revolver—I dug the bullet out of the wall today—and you faded from the picture and left Slim holding the bag. Now then," offered Pete Lawson, "if you want to chance it and talk, what've you got to say?"

JAKE SHAFER had plenty to say, and he poured it out in a stream.

"I never killed him! I didn't! He shot himself. I wouldn't kill nobody!"

"Wouldn't kill nobody, eh?" broke in Pete, bluntly. "Not even Slim Newton, by letting him hang? And what's this about Rufe killing himself?"

"That's what he did!" spluttered Jake Shafer. "He was drunk—had the willies. And like you say, he was half-crazy besides!"

Pete gave a scornful grunt. "I've heard everything now!"

"But it's the truth!" persisted Jake Shafer. "And I can tell you what happened. Two-three days after you fellers left my camp, I come down to visit Rufe Daniels. And I told him what you were lookin' around for—y'know, the feller that was startin' the trouble with the Indians. I figured it was him, but after I'd told him, I wished I hadn't. He was in bad shape."

"What d'you mean?" cut in Pete.

"He was ugly, like he was goin' into the DT's. So I pulled out and left him. But then I got to thinkin' mebbe what I told him might make him worse. I wished I'd hid his guns away. So I went back. But he was dead already. He'd shot himself with his revolver. I couldn't do him no good at all."

Pete squinted at the man narrowly. "And about that time you started to do Slim Newton no good at all."

Shafer nodded dully, and hung his head.

"Yeah. I wrote that letter. Slim Newton stole my gal—"

"*Your* gal?" blared Charlie Bear. "She was no gal of yours!"

"Yeah, yeah," stammered Jake Shafer. "But I figured I'd get around her some time. I didn't mean no harm . . ."

Glowering at the miserable Shafer, Pete said, "You admit all that? You admit that in cold blood you engineered things so that Slim Newton would take the rap, that he'd hang—on the bare chance you'd get his girl? You fat slug!" he gritted. "I ought to turn you over to Slim! But hooey to that yarn of yours! I said murder, and murder it is."

Shafer became hysterical. "I've told you the truth! It was suicide, just like I say! I'll admit I wrote that letter. I took the revolver and Rufe's box of .38's away with me. I made it look like murder—"

"You made it look like murder, all right. You wanted a murder, and you've got one! If you've stepped into Slim Newton's shoes, try and step out of 'em again by yourself!"

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

BIRD children are almost as much trouble as the human variety.

Query:—A recent minor tragedy in our household prompts this letter. My son, aged eight, discovered that a robin whose nest was located in a tree behind our house had been killed. Three of the four baby robins had suffered a similar fate either at the hands of boys or perhaps the depredations of a cat. He brought the survivor home with him.

You have probably seen a baby robin stretching its neck with beak open begging for food. You can appreciate what prompted us to try to save the little mite and bring it up with the intention of freeing it when it was able to fly and take care of itself.

I would suppose that the bird was two or three days old, certainly not more than a week. Its eyes were not open. It was absolutely mute. It was covered with a few hairs over most of its body, with a darker, thicker growth of very tiny feathers down the middle of the back. The nest and the bird were alive with lice.

We cleaned the nest and the bird as carefully as possible. We used Pulvex flea powder to kill the fleas. My son dug angle worms for the robin and we supplemented this with crumbs of bread soaked in milk. The baby robin lived for only one day. Some time during the night it died.

Should another occasion arise, I should like to know if and how a baby robin can be raised away from its mother. I remember that my Aunt Abbie raised a baby robin and that after freeing it when it could take care of itself, she insisted that the same robin came back year after year and would even come into the house.

If you can help me understand what can be done when a helpless baby bird is thrust upon us like this, I would be grateful. Could you also recommend books that would help me to give my son a better understanding of bird life?

—Walter M. Trumbull,
964 Center Ave.,
Lancaster, Pa.

Reply by Davis Quinn:—Your letter is very interesting, and I can appreciate just how you feel. It is not too easy to take such a young bird out of the nest and keep it alive, but it can be done if you are willing to follow these directions.

For what we call a soft-billed bird, such as a robin (that is to say, a bird that eats fruits, etc., as distinguished from a seed eater or hard-billed bird like a sparrow), you should start feeding mashed boiled potatoes thoroughly mixed with hard boiled egg yolk. Make this mixture fresh daily. Feed with a smooth stick. Start feeding at daylight, then every hour, till dark. DO NOT MISS. Another most important thing is a DRINK OF WATER WITH EACH MEAL. To do this, dip the stick in water and put a few drops in the bird's mouth after each feeding . . . After *two* weeks you can start gradually mixing in the following diet, which you can ultimately go onto entirely: 6 parts corn meal, 6 parts pea meal, add a little melted lard and molasses, fry well for a half hour, keeping stirred thoroughly. If this proves too rich, leave out the lard and/or the molasses. Grated carrot is well to mix in the dry food. After the two weeks, feed also as much RIPE fruit and green stuff as the bird will eat; lettuce is good, for example.

Give the bird frequent baths, every day or so. Keep it in a place comparable in texture to the nest it came from. If the nest was sticks, keep the bird on sticks; do not put it on a soft silk cushion; the hard nest causes it to move around to try and get comfortable and provides exercise necessary to proper growth and development.

Bird children may be smaller than the human variety, but they are just as much trouble to raise in the early stages and you have got to commit yourself to a rigorous routine if you wish to undertake the job.

These books are particularly to be recommended:

The Book of Bird Life, by Allen—general text book on birds, excellent. The Book of Birds, 2 vols. pub. by Natl. Geographic Society, Washington, D. C. (I do not think you can buy this one in a book store. It is very good, describing all species around here, with over 900 plates). Field Guide to Birds in Eastern N. America, by Peterson—very helpful in identifying the different species in the field.

Each of these books serves a different purpose; each is outstanding, and you could not go wrong on any of them or all of them together, if your son shows a real interest in ornithology.

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Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to the magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, financial backing or employment.

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ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Boxing—COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, care of *Adventure.*

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing: *Paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 1325 So. Main St., Princeton, Ill.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

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Fly and Bait Casting, Tournament—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Health-Building Activities, Hiking — DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling: *Regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, care of *Adventure.*

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 6520 Romaine St., Hollywood, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT WHITE, 913 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, Calif

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *Foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns, American and Foreign: Wing Shooting and Field Trails—ROY S. TINNEY, care of *Adventure.*

Small Boating: *Skiffs, outboard, small launch river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Swords, Spears, Pole Arms and Armor—MAJOR R. E. GARDNER, care of *Adventure.*

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doyles town, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 6720 Jeffery Ave., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Aviation: *Airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Entomology: *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: *The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Forestry, Tropical: *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *Anywhere in North America. Outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, care of *Adventure*.

Ornithology: *Birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 5 Minerva Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *Outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *Telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, care of *Adventure*.

Railroads: *In the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure*.

Sunken Treasure: *Treasure ships; deep-sea diving; salvage operations and equipment*—LIEUTENANT HARRY E. RIESENBERG, care of *Adventure*.

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG, 156 Joralemon St., Belleville, N. J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, care of *Adventure*.

The Merchant Marine—GORDON MACALLISTER, care of *Adventure*.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—ALEC CAVADAS, King Edward High School, Vancouver, B. C.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, care of *Adventure*.

U. S. Marine Corps—LIEUT. COL. F. W. HOPKINS, care of *Adventure*.

U. S. Navy—LIEUTENANT DURAND KIEFER, care of *Adventure*.

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Conner Field, Quartzsite, Ariz.

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, care of *Adventure*.

★New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 83 Sidney Rd., Manley N. S. W., Australia.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya*—GORDON MACCREAGH, 2231 W. Harbor Drive, St. Petersburg, Florida. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure*. **4** *Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, care of *Adventure*. **5** ★*Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, Rhodesia*—PETER FRANKLIN, Box 1491, Durban, Natal, So. Africa.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon*—V. B. WINDLE, care of *Adventure*. **2** *French Indo-China, Hong Kong, Macao, Tibet; Southern, Eastern and Central China*—Lt. Col. SEWARD S. CRAMER, care of *Adventure*. **4** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure*. **5** ★*Palestine*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C.

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THE TRAIL AHEAD

Next month you'll approach the Wells of Galla in the angle between Somaliland and Abyssinia, hard on the heels of three men; one, Craig, his sunburned legs scratched by the wicked bush thorns, carried nothing but a fly whisk. The other two were black and one of them was crippled and one was blind and the crippled one rode upon the shoulders of the sightless to guide him. Following the three came a train of porters weighted down by a great table of ebony studded with jewels—as strange a caravan as ever crossed the Kenya wastes.

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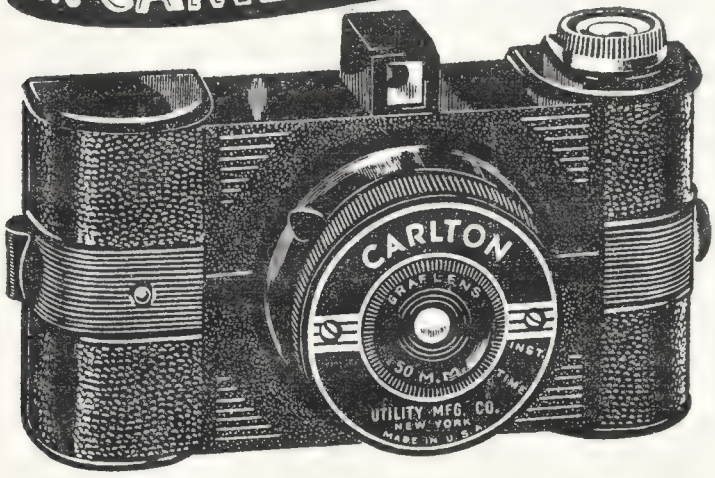

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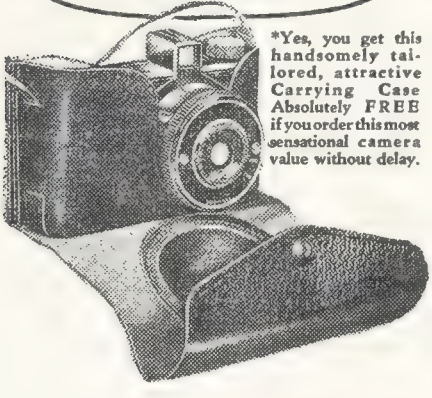

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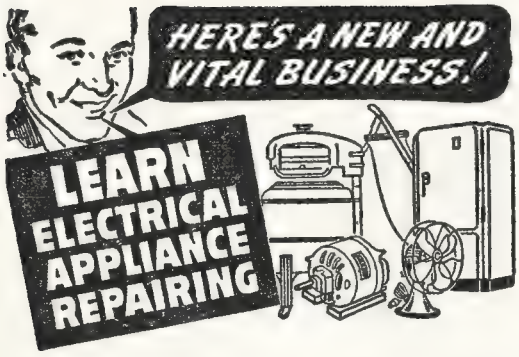

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(Continued from page 85)

his chimney. Lambert hid in the adjacent scrub oaks and shot him off the roof with a rifle. A short time later Ollie Keene, a Brandon rider, ran the Indian down with dogs and killed him.

Beetree Allen was suspected by Jim Towles of being a Brandon spy, so as he was making the rounds of his traps one morning he was waylaid and killed by Roy and Harrison Padgett, who shot him from ambush.

Eventually the Brandons, the Towles and the Padgetts, as well as many of the other pioneers, killed each other off, died, or left the country, and as new ranchers came in and acquired land and timber, those who remained began to have a more wholesome respect for the law.

As an aftermath to the bloody range wars came the influx of homesteaders from the East and Middle West. Prior to 1911 the cattlemen were served by a branch line of the Seaboard Air Line running to Perry from Monticello. The Atlantic Coast Line then built a road through the cattle country, and along with the railroad came a group of Eastern capitalists who operated as Bolds & Jennings.

The Coast Line Railroad advertised for homesteaders to come to Florida and take up land grants of 160 acres. To those who were not financially able to carry themselves for the six-month period until they could prove their grants, Bold & Jennings offered unlimited credit, taking as security a mortgage on the homestead of the settler. They erected a huge store on San Pedro Bay, and the town which they built around it was called Charlton.

The disillusioned homesteaders found too late that the land upon which they had filed headright papers was valueless except for grazing and the timber rights. Usually they stayed as long as the credit held out, or until they had proved their claims, when Bold & Jennings foreclosed the mortgages and gave them sufficient money to return home, and the property became a part of the holdings of the company. Some few remained and went to work for the cattlemen.

After some 25,000 acres had been acquired in this manner, Bolds & Jennings bought an additional 15,000 acres of virgin cypress and hardwood timber on Pipestem Bay and San Pedro Bay for twenty-five cents an acre. Moving fifty miles southeastward then, they established Pascoe Station near the site of the later famous logging camp at Carbur, where they secured 23,000 additional acres of timber through mortgage foreclosures on homestead rights. Through these foreclosure proceedings the timberland cost them approximately two dollars an acre.

Out of this great homestead racket grew Florida's cypress and hardwood industry, and

today the largest cypress lumber mill in the world is located at Perry, a thriving little city with a normal population in excess of 20,000.

Florida now breeds the finest cattle to be found anywhere in the country, and her herds of 1,036,000 roam over more than eight million acres owned and controlled by the cattlemen of the state. Some of the larger outfits range as many as 50,000 cattle, and herds of 25,000 are not uncommon. One of the largest ranches in Florida is the Horse Shoe Ranch with headquarters at Kicco. Their range in Polk, Highlands and Okeechobee counties covers a territory of approximately 450 square miles. Among the other large brands are the King Ranch near Arcadia, owned by Lykes Brothers of Tampa, and the Koons brand at Punta Gorda.

Brooks-Scanlon Corporation of Foley, in Taylor County, ranges approximately twenty-five different brands, including the old Spade-Up-And-Down. This company also operates one of the largest pine mills in the South, as well as a great redwood mill at Bend, Oregon, and pulp and paper mills at various points in the Northwest.

Among the old Taylor County pioneers who remain are Martin Towles, a son of Jim Towles, who runs the LE iron, Andy Poppels of the 15, Joe Raulerson of the R, and J. A. Faulkner, who now has the J-Bar-3, the OK and the

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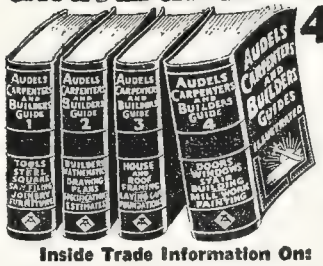

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RF. The J-Bar-3, originally established by Redbone Jim Johnson, was sold to John Connell in 1908, who disposed of it to Faulkner shortly before his death. The writer is indebted to John Connell, Jr., the son of the J-Bar-3 owner for this history of the cattle frontier.

Like the cattle barons of the Old West, the Florida cowmen who ruled the range with a hand of iron have nearly all gone to their reward. Typical of their passing is the story of Marion Brandon, the last to bear the once powerful name which wrote its deeds in crimson letters upon the pages of Florida's cattle history.

Marion Brandon disposed of five hundred head of cattle, the final remnant of his once vast herds, to Zack Miller of the 101 brand. As he paid Brandon five thousand dollars for his cattle, Miller said sadly, "Marion, I'm sorry to see this happen. You've had a good brand of cattle ever since the days of the Indians."

"Yes," Marion replied, "Tom and Walter died for the cattle. I'm through." His old eyes were dimmed with sadness, and with a final gesture of the reckless abandon of bygone years, he handed Miller a dollar watch and his pearl-handled .44 with the laconic assertion, "You've got everything else I own; I'll throw these in with the cattle."

Marion Brandon caught the next train out of Perry and has never been heard of since that day. With his passing the once proud name of Brandon has slowly faded from memory's dim and misted glass, and the balance of power once wielded by the Brandons and the Towles, the Padgetts and the Stephens, has passed into the able hands of a new breed of cowmen who transact their business across mahogany desks, far from the sound of the clattering hoofs of their great herds, and with its passing has also vanished the flaming six-gun of the frontier days.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and for women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

Captain Rudolph Petersen who used to write sea stories formerly lived at Locust Street, 133 Street, Bronx, New York City, N. Y. Last heard from in 1940. Anyone knowing his present address please communicate with Norman Gilmartin, c/o General Delivery, Brooklyn General Postoffice, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Anyone knowing the whereabout of John S. Peebles, Jr. please write J. S. Peebles, White Cloud, Michigan, RFD#2. His parents have considered him dead but have lately heard that he is still alive and they have been unable to obtain his address.

Bill Arenz, who left Jacksonville, Ill., in 1940. I am married to your daughter, Helen, and would like to meet or hear from you. E. D. Meany, 407 Highland Ave., Palisade Park, N. J.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Joe, Lonnie or Sam Standley, last heard of at Round Rock, Texas, or of John, Dave, Willie or Jim Hall, farmers, last heard of at Vanatlyne, Texas 50 years ago, please contact Arthur Callaham, Idabel, Okla.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Herbert A. Roig—forty-three years old, five feet ten inches tall, weighs a hundred and fifty pounds, gray eyes, brown hair, last heard of in 1939 in Houston, Texas—please communicate with his friend Frank Landon, 1146 Webster St., San Francisco 15, Calif.

If anybody has any information regarding Luther (Red) Wright, who some years ago lived in Independence, Mo., and later moved to Joplin, Mo., would they please get in touch with Pfc. Elvin Clyde Hancock, Jr., USMC, MDNAS, Hitchcock, Texas. Wright was a close friend of my father's and I would like to find out about his son, who is about the same age as myself and was a friend of mine.

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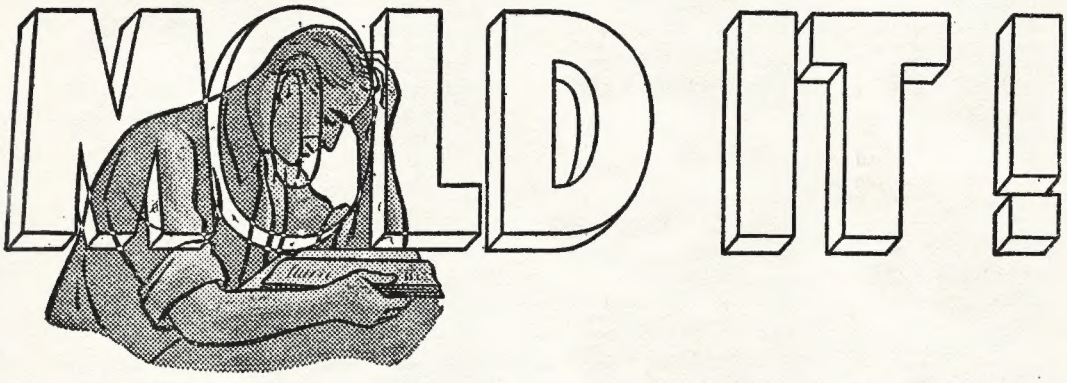

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